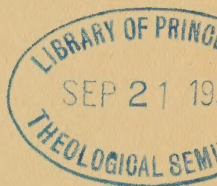


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Christian essentials

CHRISTIAN ESSENTIALS

Christian Essentials

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT CHRISTIANITY
AND WHY WE BELIEVE IT



By

JOHN McDOWELL

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Dedicated
to
Mrs. William R. Moody
and
The Northfield Young Women's Conference

FOREWORD

IT is always difficult and dangerous to undertake to describe an age by a single word or phrase, yet men are constantly doing so. Some have described the present age as one of doubt, others as an age of faith, and still others as an age of social service. Ample evidence could be found for each of these descriptions. They are not necessarily exclusive, nor are they inclusive. These are not the only features of the physiognomy of our age.

From our point of view, this is an age that is seeking the essentials in every realm of human life. Evidence of this spirit is apparent in the realm of government, of education, of industry, and of religion. While there is a growing indifference to the non-essentials in religion, there is evidence that thoughtful men and women care for the essentials of religion with deep concern. Earnest-minded people are still clinging to the essentials of religion that deepen faith in God, quicken love for man, create moral courage, and nourish spiritual life. Men never wanted the essential truths of religion more than they want them to-day. Our age is demanding a religion that is not afraid to reason, nor ashamed to believe.

Christianity welcomes this spirit, and that for two reasons: first, Christianity has created it. One

does not find it where Christianity is not known, or where it is not dominant; second, Christianity is able, and just as willing as it is able, to satisfy this demand. "Prove all things," said the Apostle Paul, "hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21). "Try the spirits," said the Apostle John, "whether they are of God" (I John 4:1). Christianity encourages men to hold fast to all the good in the past and to appropriate all that is best in the present: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Any Christianity that evades or ignores the demand of this age for the essentials of religion is a Christianity that can scarcely ever have known Christ and His apostles.

Present-day Christianity is insisting that all who bear the name of Christ, and own Him as their Saviour and their Lord, should know what they believe about Christianity and why they believe it. In a word, the dominant spirit of our age is demanding that every Christian should know the Christian essentials. By the Christian essentials we mean those things without which Christianity is not the Christianity of Christ and the New Testament. What are they? The chapters which follow are an attempt to answer this timely and vital question.

JOHN McDOWELL.

New York City.

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I

THE ESSENTIAL RECORD: THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHRISTIANITY comes to us in three distinct ways. It comes to us through literary records, which are the survivals of the primitive literature which the religion of Jesus Christ created. These documents now constitute the New Testament. Again, it comes to us as a factor in our environment. Born in Christendom, we find it round us; and it finds us in Christian homes, Christian schools, Christian churches and Christian communities—a complex web of elements woven into social and national life. Further, it comes to us, as individuals, through a personal experience of which one can never altogether convey the secret to his fellow-men, but which is none the less real and vital.

Before Christianity was either a literature or a history, before it had manifested itself on the wide fields of community and national life, or worked its way into writings, it was a personal experience. And probably the first and last attestation of its claim and its truth that a man receives is something intimately personal, although many other evidences may come to give it support and confirmation. In these days of reconsideration of the nature and the

claims of Christianity, we need all the evidence available in support of our allegiance to it. We should know and welcome the testimony of Christian records, the testimony of Christian history and the testimony of Christian experience. Let us not make the mistake of putting the whole weight of the argument for Christianity on the credibility of any one of this threefold testimony. Let us claim them all in the confirmation of our faith, for if either one of them is sufficient, how much stronger, therefore, will be all their combined testimony.

Each of these sources of evidence, of course, has its peculiar and particular contribution to make in the realm of evidence for Christianity, and all of them are necessary to a full-orbed New Testament Christianity. If we are to be well-informed Christians, we ought to know the testimony of the New Testament records, the testimony of all Christian history and the testimony of Christian experience. For the facts and truths upon which Christianity is based we must go to the New Testament. These writings contain the only authentic knowledge we have of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. And to go back to the beginnings of Christianity, we must go through the writings of the New Testament. There is no other way. We need to realize that the only Christ we know to-day in terms of facts and truths is the Christ of the New Testament. The crucial question, therefore, is not whether the New Testament is inspired or whether it is a religious book, but whether it is true, whether these records are genuine and whether they are

trustworthy as records of the facts and truths of Christianity.

Modern unbelief seeks to overthrow the historical character of the New Testament records and to treat them as mythological, as Niebuhr treats the traditions concerning Romulus and Remus. In meeting this attack we do well to remember that the events recorded in the New Testament occupy a period not longer than the lifetime of a man. The New Testament consists of twenty-seven independent documents, written by several persons, at different dates: Four biographies of Christ, twenty-one letters by those engaged in the spread of the new religion, one church history covering a period of about fourteen years after the ascension, and one apocalypse, the Revelation of John.

What I desire to show in this chapter is that the historical evidences of the life, teachings, miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of the Founder of Christianity and of its first propagators is of an authentic and satisfactory character according to the principle of legal evidence administered in the courts of common law under our government. Our inquiry, therefore, divides itself into two parts: First, are these ancient writings proved to be genuine according to the principles of law applied where ancient documents are offered as evidence in our courts of law? Then, are the authors of these writings (provided the writings are received as genuine) entitled to belief as witnesses when we examine their testimony as if it were produced in court?

We speak first, then, as to the genuineness of the documents. This is a proposition of fact; such a

proposition is proved when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence. The word "competent" means such as the nature of the thing to be proved requires; "satisfactory" means that which will satisfy the mind and conscience of an ordinary man. The rule of municipal law as to the genuineness of ancient writings is clear, undoubted, familiar, perfectly well established and often applied in the courts. It is this:

"Every document apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and casts upon the opposite party the burden of proving it to be otherwise; and it may be read in evidence unless the opposing party is able successfully to impeach it" (*Greenleaf on Evidence*, Sections 34, 142, 570).

The writings of the New Testament fall precisely within this rule. These writings are found in the custody of the Christian Church, that is, found in the place where they would naturally be looked for, and they have been found in familiar use in every Christian community from the days of their composition. All the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament we now possess are written on parchment or vellum, and the number and antiquity of these manuscripts are surprisingly great, far greater than in the case of the manuscripts of any of the celebrated and unquestioned writings of classic antiquity, or of any of the universally accepted law books and statutes of Rome or England.

In support of this statement we call attention to the fact that we have to-day about one thousand manuscripts of the New Testament, of which about fifty are more than one thousand years old, and some are more than fifteen hundred years old. In fact, we have manuscripts nearer to the lifetime of the apostles than we are to the lifetime of the Pilgrim Fathers, and the writers of them could have known those who themselves knew the apostles. We have less than thirty of the manuscripts of Plato and Herodotus, and none of them is one thousand years old. The Emperor Constantine directed fifty copies of the New Testament to be made and distributed, and there is less controversy in regard to the text of the New Testament than respecting that of Shakespeare.

The old manuscripts are, curiously enough, in the possession of the three great branches of the Christian Church: The Alexandrine (called for shortness *Codex A*) belongs to Protestant England and is kept in the Manuscript Room of the British Museum; the Vatican (*Codex B*) is in the Vatican Library at Rome; the Sinaitic (*Codex Aleph*), which has lately been discovered, is one of the treasures of the Greek Church at Leningrad. These manuscripts show us the New Testament as it existed soon after the apostolic days. There has been a good deal of discussion about their age which need not be entered on here, but we shall not be far from the truth if we say roundly that they ranged from 350 to 450 A. D.

Besides these manuscripts, we have the writings of more than one hundred accepted writers, begin-

ning with the latter part of the first century of the Christian era, who testify to the New Testament writings and their genuineness. Among these writers are Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian of Carthage, Irenæus of Lyons, Titian, Justin Martyr, Marcion, Papias and Polycarp. These writers quote so freely from the New Testament records that it has been said by reliable students that we could practically reconstitute the New Testament from their writings. Comparisons show that our present New Testament Gospels were the Gospels of these early fathers.

The age in which these documents were put forth was not by any means a mythological age; it was an age in which written records were universally kept and in which historical literature flourished. It was the age of great historians, such as Livy, Plutarch, Valerius Maximus, and Tacitus. The New Testament writers did not aim to be historical writers; they describe no political conditions. They simply set forth the public life and ministry of Christ and the propagation of His teachings. It is true that we do not have anywhere the original manuscripts of these New Testament documents. Critics have laid great stress on this fact and have argued against the character of these copies as evidence. It should be remembered that this same objection should apply to almost every record of antiquity and to all the undisputed writers of Greece and Rome, and would be no objection at all in a court of law.

The second part of our inquiry concerns the degree of credit to which the writers of the New Tes-

tament are entitled, as witnesses to the life and doctrines of Jesus Christ, on the principles of the law as applied in our courts in trials of fact, or jury trials.

“ When witnesses are examined in court, where there are no circumstances which create suspicion, every witness is presumed worthy of belief, unless the contrary is shown; and the burden of impeaching his credibility rests on the opposing party ” (*Starkie on Evidence*, 16, 480, 521).

The credit due to witnesses depends, first, on their honesty; second, on their ability; third, on the number of witnesses and the consistency of their testimony; fourth, on their opportunities for observation; fifth, on the coincidence of their testimony with collateral circumstances (*Starkie*, 480, 545).

These witnesses are entitled, as respects their honesty, to the benefit of the elementary maxim of the law that men speak the truth when they have no prevailing inducement to the contrary. This presumption is allowed every day in our courts. Now, the testimony of the Christian writers was against all their worldly interests. Their new doctrines were extremely offensive in every community where they were preached. They were held hostile to public order, and led so good a man as the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic philosopher, to put Christians to death. And these witnesses looked for nothing but opposition, persecution, imprisonment, and violent death. It would be held in court under these circumstances, and a

judge in a trial of facts would so charge the jury, that these motives would operate to lead them to state what was true. Moreover, it would be impossible to read their lives and writings, and consider their sacrifices, and not feel that they were men of integrity.

Respecting the ability of these witnesses to discern and know the truth of the facts which they relate, it is clear that the opportunities which they had, many as eye-witnesses, were such as to attest the truth of what they say. The common law in our courts presumes that men are of the average integrity and intelligence. No lawyer is allowed to argue in court against the integrity or intelligence of any witness where there is no testimony against his intelligence or against his integrity.

Concerning the number and consistency of witnesses and of their testimony, it is sufficient to observe that every day in court a substantial agreement, where there are several witnesses sworn to the same transaction, is considered sufficient. In the New Testament writings, there is enough of discrepancy to show that there could have been no prior concert among the writers, and there is such substantial agreement as we might naturally expect in upright and independent narrators of the same transaction.

Respecting the conformity of the testimony of the New Testament writers with experience and truth, this is conceded in general by sceptics, except where the facts are such as do not frequently occur in human experience, particularly as regards the miracles of Christ. It is not within the scope

of this discussion to consider the argument pro and con respecting miracles. I may, however, observe that the evidence which supports the miracles of Jesus Christ is exactly the same as that which supports the facts of His existence and His teachings. The authority is the same, the title to belief is the same. If the deity of Christ be accepted, then it is impossible to deny belief in miracles. In respect to every miracle which is related in the New Testament, the facts were plain, intelligible, occurring in public, and such as no person of ordinary powers of observation could mistake. The blind and lame who applied to our Saviour were relieved, though they were known in the community to have been blind and lame for many years. In every case of health restored, the various conditions of the sufferer were known to all, and all saw immediate restoration; all heard the words of the Saviour.

These plain and simple facts were easily seen and comprehended by persons of common capacity, and if such facts were substantially testified to by different witnesses of ordinary intelligence in any of our courts to-day, the jury would be bound to believe them, and a verdict rendered contrary to the testimony of such witnesses to such facts would be liable to be set aside by the court as a verdict against evidence. In the case of a man born blind, known and shown to be blind from his birth, if his restoration to sight were the fact in question and established by such testimony, according to the rules of evidence in our courts, no lawyer would be permitted to argue against the fact.

As respects the coincidence of the testimony of

the New Testament writers with contemporaneous facts, the rule of the law is as follows:

“After a witness is dead and his narrative is under examination, its truth can be tested only by comparing its details with contemporary acts. The test is an accurate one, because he knows there is danger of detection by comparison of what he states with other occurrences of the same time and place; and consequently the law lays down the rule that variety and minuteness of detail are tests of truth. Accordingly, the force of evidence rests upon the nature of the particulars which are involved in the statement. The difficulty of fabrication is respect to all the statements, and the facility of detection remove suspicion of contrivance and design” (*Starkie on Evidence*, 496, 499, 523, 585).

We should treat the evidence of the New Testament writers as we treat the evidence of other men, as to other things; and we should judge these writers as we judge other men when testifying to human affairs in our ordinary tribunals in regard to ordinary transactions. The witnesses should be compared with themselves, with each other, and with the surrounding facts and circumstances. That is what is done in our ordinary courts, and an examination of the statements of the New Testament writers, according to these rules of law, will lead to a conviction of their truthfulness as well as their ability. The contemporary writings which have come down to us have been found to confirm these writers. We can compare their statements with contemporary authors and we can verify the cir-

cumstances to which they relate; many examples of such comparison might be given.

It is evident that the writers of the New Testament were not poets, dwelling in the realm of imagination. They were not philosophers, weaving some more or less ingenious explanation of the universe. They are not advocates, arguing for glory. They claim to be witnesses to plain facts. They walk on common earth. They bring us not arguments, but a personal experience, which is stated in the Record as follows: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:1-5).

It is clear that these writers claim to offer us not speculations, but facts; not syllogisms, but history, and that they do this with the assent and authority of personal witnesses. Indeed, these writers of the New Testament give us the strongest proof of their sincerity; namely, they lived only to tell their story, and they died as martyrs for the story they told.

The demand of the modern truth-seeker is: Back to the beginnings of Christianity, back to the actual Founder of it, back beyond creeds and organization, to the original Jesus. This demand can be met only through the New Testament. Outside of it we have no authoritative information as to the beginnings of the Christian religion.

If, therefore, we are ever to come to the Christ of reality, rather than to the Christ of vagary and fancy, we must come by way of the Book, the New Testament. No other body of documents can give the historical background to the revelation given us in Christ or the immediate historic consequences flowing from it. It is not too much to claim that the New Testament records have been put under the most powerful lenses of modern criticism. They have been scanned by friends and foes alike, they have been taken to pieces and analyzed by the philologist and the archæologist and the modern historian. Surely, never did a fiercer light beat upon any documents than has been focused on the writings of the New Testament.

It appears, as a result of this high pressure investigation, that the evangelical history of Christianity, as embodied in the New Testament, is worthy of all acceptance. Indeed, it may be questioned whether any other history carries such credentials or is entitled to equal reliance. Apart from the historic Christ, the Christian faith is insecure, and apart from the New Testament, the historic Christ is unknown. We quite agree with John Stuart Mill, when he says: "Whatever else may be taken away by rational criticism, Christ is still

left,—the unique figure. It is useless to say that Christ as He is exhibited in the Gospels is not historical. Who among His followers or His proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or imagining the life and characters revealed in the Gospel? ” As Christians, we do well to remember that if the New Testament cannot be authenticated, then the facts and truths of Christianity fall to the ground; but if it can be authenticated, then the facts and truths of Christianity stand.

Now, from all this examination we see that the authenticity of no other book is more clearly established than the authenticity of the New Testament. It is an authenticated New Testament which brings us the facts and the truths upon which Christianity rests, the New Testament that fears no fair examination and evades no honest investigation. The New Testament is not only the only textbook we have on Christianity, it is the only written title deed we have to Christianity, and any fair-minded jury we believe would say that the title deed is good.

THE ESSENTIAL FACTOR: JESUS CHRIST

IS Christ a necessity to Christianity? If so, in what respects? These are the most important questions being asked to-day about Christianity. They touch its heart, its spiritual dynamic; they involve all that is fundamental in its character and claims.

The questions have their origin in what Dr. Orchard, of London, has described as "a serious and sustained attempt to remove Christ from the position given Him in the Christian scheme of things." Whatever may be the purpose of these questions, there can be no doubt that there is a demand abroad to-day for a Christianity without Christ. Craig S. Thoms, in his book, *The Essentials of Christianity*, tells of a young man who had said to him: "God's relation to us would be simple enough if Jesus Christ had just kept out." It is this attempt to keep Christ out that makes it imperative for all who believe in Christianity, and who are venturing their life upon it here and hereafter, to consider earnestly and prayerfully the relation of Christ to Christianity.

It goes without saying that any answer to this inquiry worthy of serious consideration must be determined by the character of the authority on

which it can rest and of the sources of information on which it can rely. Let me hasten to say that Christ Himself is the supreme authority on all matters pertaining to Christianity, and the New Testament is the primary source of information regrading its teachings and claims.

On the basis of this authority and source of information, we affirm that Christ is a necessity to Christianity and, therefore, the essential factor in Christianity. In support of this affirmation we cite the teachings of Christ in the Gospels, and of Paul the apostle.

The words which Jesus used of Himself in the Gospels, like those which His follower, Paul, later used regarding Him, are explicit, detailed and inescapable in their teaching of the necessity of Jesus Christ to Christianity, as it was in apostolic times and as it is to-day.

Christ defined Christianity in terms of Himself. Witness the seven "I am's" in the Gospel of John: "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35); "I am the light of the world" (9:5); "I am the door" (10:9); "I am the good shepherd" (10:11); "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25); "I am the way, the truth and the life" (14:6); "I am the vine" (15:1).

Christ insisted, also, upon personal devotion to Himself: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me" (Matt. 11:29). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven; but whoso-

ever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32, 33). "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:37-39). "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:22). "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9). "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Christ identified Himself with His message. He will not own personal attachment to Himself which is divorced from His spiritual ideals: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21-23). "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples" (John 8:31). "If ye

love me, keep my commandments ” (John 14:15). “ If a man love me, he will keep my words ” (John 14:23).

Christ demanded faith and belief in Himself as a condition for the vouchsafing of His help: “ This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent ” (John 6:29). “ I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me shall never die ” (John 11:25). “ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me ” (John 14:1). “ Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very works’ sake ” (John 14:11).

Moreover, Christ is Himself the Gospel: “ Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord ” (Luke 2:10, 11). “ The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord ” (Luke 4:18, 19). “ Jesus Christ,” says Dr. Dale, “ came not to preach the Gospel, but that there might be a Gospel to preach.”

He established the Lord’s Supper as a memorial to Himself: “ This do in remembrance of me ” (Luke 22:19).

He based assurance of final victory of eternal life on Himself: “ I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck

them out of my hand ” (John 10:28). “ Because I live ye shall live also ” (John 14:19). “ In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world ” (John 16:33).

In the teachings of the Apostle Paul we note that it was the manifestation of Christ that converted Saul of Tarsus (Gal. 1:16); the love of Christ that constrained the Apostle Paul (II Cor. 5:14); and the power of Christ that impelled him (II Cor. 5:9). Christ was his certainty (II Tim. 1:12) and his strength (II Tim. 2:1). Christ was his peace (Eph. 2:14) and his hope (Col. 1:27).

Through Christ Paul lived and suffered (Phil. 3:8-10); in Christ he gloried (Gal. 6:14); for Christ’s sake he lived and died (II Cor. 5:5-11). Christ was the foundation of his faith and his hope (I Cor. 3:18), his “ all and in all ” (Col. 3:11).

These, and many other passages, make it perfectly clear that in the Christianity of the New Testament it is a *Person*, not a dogma, that invites our faith; a *Person*, not a code, that seeks our obedience. Christ offered Himself to the world as the solution of all its difficulties, and as the source of a new life. He asked men simply to believe in Him, to love Him, to obey Him, to follow Him. To those who became His disciples He gave instruction in many things, but to those who were not He offered, first of all, Himself—not a doctrine, nor a plan of life, but a living *Person*.

It is easily discoverable from the teaching of the New Testament that Jesus asked from His disciples something more than mere assent to His words. He asked them for a devotion to His ideals, conse-

cration to His service,—in a word, absolute loyalty to Himself. Thus, the Christian faith finds its centre, not in a book or a creed, or a philosophy, or an ethical code or a many-centuried institution, but in a living *Person*. Indeed, it may be said that the whole case of Christianity rests on two facts: The fact of a divine *Person* and the fact of a divine history. “The historical fact of Christ,” says Dr. Cairns, “interpreted by faith, is the central secret of New Testament Christianity.

We need also to be reminded, these days, that Christian faith is more than faith in the ideal that Jesus cherished, more than faith in the institution He founded. This “more” is always defined in the Gospels as faith in Jesus Christ. If one were to eliminate the personal pronoun “I” from the New Testament, its teachings would have no meaning. In the New Testament Christ is not only the messenger, but the message, not only the preacher of the Gospel, but its embodiment. It is because of what He is, that the Gospel is believable. His personality is not only essential to its proclamation, but its absolute incarnation. In Christianity Christ teaches truth, but He Himself is the truth. Christ creates light, but He Himself is the light. Christ reveals the Father, but He Himself is God incarnate.

No one can read the New Testament without being impressed with the fact that it is Christ’s presence that quickens repentance, brings the consciousness of sin forgiven, confers the only possible comfort in sorrow, ease in pain, peace in struggle, and instils in the human heart the certainty of

divine love. For the solution of all spiritual problems New Testament Christianity points the ages to Jesus Christ. The method of Jesus in the days of His flesh was to bind men to Himself by bonds of living loyalty, and that method He has never superseded. It still holds. Love to Christ, devotion to His person and to His aims, are, as of yore, the best means of discovering the truth of His claims—means within the reach of all mankind.

Bereft of the irresistible spell of its Founder, Christianity would pass into an intellectual and ethical theory. It would cease to be a religion and become just another of the many philosophies of the ages. Take Christ out of history, and at once you lose touch with the Divine; the Face of God, the Father, suffers an eclipse. To undertake to explain Christianity without Christ is a performance which can only provoke intellectual contempt. No one but Christ ever dared to say: "I am the way, the truth, the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me." Certainly, in these days, when all kinds of men and all kinds of movements are calling themselves by the name of Christ, often regardless of their aims or their character, we do well to remind ourselves that according to the teachings of the New Testament no one is a Christian who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, and no one can properly love the Lord Jesus who does not enjoy conscious, personal fellowship and intercourse with him. "Lovest thou me?" is still Christ's challenge to humanity. He addresses it to every one who would bear His Name. It is the

sine qua non of both personal Christianity and Christian service.

There may be life without Christ, but the New Testament makes it clear that there can be no Christian life without Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:12). There may be truth without Christ, but there is no Christian truth without Christ. "I am the truth" (John 14:6). Christ is the ground upon which Christian truth rests. He is its source, its guarantee, its power and its test. There may be growth without Christ, but there can be no Christian growth without Christ. Only as our life begins in Him and is nourished by Him can we grow into His likeness and be worthy of His Name. There may be service without Christ, but there can be no Christian service without Christ. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4).

There may be fellowship without Christ, but there can be no Christian fellowship without Christ. In Christ and Christ alone Christian fellowship lives and moves and has its being. There may be hope without Christ, but there is no Christian hope without Christ. Christian hope centres in the *Person* of Jesus Christ. He proclaimed Himself as the embodiment of this hope and by His own resurrection the promise was sealed. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall

never die " (John 11:26). We date Christian hope from the hour—

*"When from the grave He sprang at dawn of day,
And led through boundless air Thy conquering road,
Leaving a glorious track, where saints, newborn,
Might fearless follow to their blessed abode."*

Christian hope leads us from trust in a future event to trust in a living, present Person. Martha in her sorrow had affirmed her belief in a resurrection at the last day. But Jesus knew that this belief was giving her no comfort, and immediately He led her from her belief in a future event to a belief in a present Person, and that Person Himself. Hope carries us beyond our trust in Christ's promises to trust in Himself. We believe in His promises because we believe in Him. With Christ it is, "He that believeth in me"—not merely in "My gifts or My promises." Indeed, it may be said that we cannot have His gifts without having the Giver. Faith in His promises involves faith in the Promiser. Hence He asks Martha: "Believest thou this?" And her answer practically amounts to saying: "I do more than believe this—I believe Thee" (John 11:26, 27).

The hope of the New Testament Christians always centres in Christ. Writing to the Colossians, Paul speaks of "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Writing to the Thessalonians, he speaks of "our hope in the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 1:3). Writing to Timothy, he speaks of "our Lord Jesus Christ who is our hope" (I Tim. 1:1).

Thus, everywhere throughout the New Testament Christian hope is rooted and grounded in the Person of Jesus Christ. Apart from His words and His works there is no ground for the Christian hope. Eliminate Christ, and you have no promise of the resurrection and life in the Christian religion.

What Christianity offers to men is not life or truth or growth or service or fellowship or hope, apart from Christ, but Christ Himself. A man apart from Christ cannot be a Christian. He loses Christianity as absolutely as a hand would lose its use and its meaning if it were severed from the body.

The acknowledgment that Christ is Christianity is bound up with New Testament Christianity. Take away this conception of Christianity, and you may have life left, but not Christian life. You may have truth left, but not Christian truth. You may have growth left, but not Christian growth. You may have service left, but not Christian service. You may have fellowship left, but not Christian fellowship. You may have hope left, but not Christian hope. Christian history and Christian experience affirm that Jesus Christ is the essential factor in Christianity.

*"If Jesus Christ is a man,
And only a man, I say
That of all mankind I will cleave to Him,
And to Him will I cleave away.*

*"If Jesus Christ is a God,
And the only God, I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea and the air."*

THE ESSENTIAL CLAIM: THE INCARNATION

THE most important questions of our day are the questions which centre in religion. The most important questions in religion are those which centre in Jesus Christ. And the most important questions which centre in Jesus Christ are these: Who was He? What did He come to do?

The first of these questions concerns the Person of Christ, and the second, the mission of Christ. Both are important and vital to a full-orbed Christianity; they ought to be honestly faced and fearlessly answered by all who bear the name of Christ. In this study we are to consider the first, Who was Jesus Christ?

Who is this Person in whom Christianity lives, and moves, and has its being? It is not enough to know that Jesus Christ is the essential factor in Christianity; if we are to propagate Christianity, we must know why He holds this supreme place; and if we are to understand what Christianity really means, we must know who this Christ is who stands at its centre and fills it with life and

light and love. In a word, we must know the essential claim of Christianity.

It will not do for the followers of Jesus Christ to be indifferent to the Person of Christ. We must not forget that Christ Himself proposed the question to His disciples: "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). This question cannot be evaded, and it must not be ignored, simply because Christianity is based on the Person of its Founder. Who He was, therefore, will determine the value of all He said and of all He did.

What, then, is the essential claim of Christianity? We answer, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and in support of this imperative claim we present the teachings of our textbook on Christianity, the New Testament.

Let us note:

THE MEANING OF THE INCARNATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Incarnation was not a mere manifestation of certain attributes or qualities of God. It was not a temporary manifestation of God's mercy or pity or love. The Incarnation was no mere presence of God in man; no mere mode of mystical indwelling; no mere moral relationship such as might exist between friends, nor was it just a part of the life of Jesus Christ; it included His whole earthly life from the manger to the Cross.

The Incarnation does not consist in the fact that Jesus Christ said certain things about God which

mankind had not known, or had forgotten. It was a real, permanent, indissoluble union of two perfect natures, divine and human, in one personality. The Incarnation in the New Testament makes it clear that nothing that God is contradicts what Jesus Christ was, and nothing that Jesus Christ was belies what God is. Incarnation in the New Testament means that God is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is God.

THE REALITY OF THE INCARNATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The fact of the Incarnation is pre-eminent in the New Testament record. And the Jesus of the Incarnation is a real man, a real God, a real person. On each of these three points the evidence is impregnable. We find it thus, for example, as to:

The Reality of the Humanity of Jesus Christ. When we come to the New Testament we find that Jesus Christ was not an abstract formula, not a collection of definitions, not a mysterious ceremony, but a real person, seen from four points of view, and that the writers of the Gospels never were in doubt about the human nature of Jesus Christ, and never hesitated to make the most positive affirmations regarding it.

Christ used the title, "The Son of Man," to describe Himself, in Matthew thirty times, in Luke twenty-five times, in Mark fourteen times, and in John eleven times.

The Gospels show that He was in subjection to His parents as a child (Luke 2:51). His character

was unfolded and perfected in discipline (Luke 2:52). He laboured for His daily bread, and prayed for daily grace. He hungered, and slept, and rejoiced, and wept. He was anointed with the Spirit for His ministry. He was tempted. He was lonely and disappointed.

The epistles, too, emphasize the humanity of Christ. Paul says: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9). And again, in Phil. 2:6, 7, he says: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

The writer of the book of Hebrews says: "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17). "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). It is evident from this review of the teachings of the New Testament that the humanity of Jesus Christ was never questioned or doubted by those who knew Him best. If there is any fact which stands out luminous in the teachings of the New Testament it is the complete, genuine and veritable humanity of Jesus Christ.

The Reality of the Deity of Jesus Christ. If the Scripture testimony as to the reality of Jesus' humanity is clear, it is no less compelling as to His deity. Jesus Christ was "Very God of very God."

He Himself accepted the title of the Son of God: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 16:13-16). He was condemned by the Jews because He made Himself God: "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:33).

Moreover, Jesus' own claims for Himself were frank and outspoken. He claimed a divine origin, "I came forth from God" (John 16:28); a divine mission, "My Father sent me" (John 12:49); a divine knowledge, "No man knoweth the Father save the Son" (Matt. 11:27); a divine fellowship, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee" (John 17:25); and a divine unveiling of the Father, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Indeed, Jesus possessed the attributes of God; namely, life, "In him was life" (John 1:4); self-existence, "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26); immutability, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day and forever" (Heb. 13:8); truth, "I am the truth" (John 14:6); holiness, "The holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35); eternity, "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1); omnipresence, "Lo, I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20); omniscience, "Jesus, knowing their thoughts" (Matt. 9:4); "In whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3); and omnipotence, "All

power is given unto me in heaven and in earth " (Matt. 28:18).

Again, the works of God are ascribed to Jesus Christ, such as: Creation, "All things were made by him" (John 1:3); upholding, "In him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17); and judging the world, "He shall sit on his throne, and before him shall be gathered all nations" (Matt. 25-31-32).

Jesus receives honour and worship due only to God: "Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:28); "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23); "Stephen, calling upon the Lord and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59); "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:10).

Jesus Christ's name, finally, is associated with that of God upon a footing of equality in the formula of baptism: "Baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19); and in the apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all" (II Cor. 13:14).

Such teachings as these, and many others which might be added, make clear the reality of the deity of Jesus Christ. We heartily agree with Dr. Henry van Dyke when he says: "It is certain that this age of ours, with its ruthless, critical spirit, with its keen historic sense, will never respect the intelli-

gence, though it may acknowledge the goodness, of a man who professes to speak in the name of Christianity, without proclaiming as the core of his message the divine Christ. To imagine that we can adapt our preaching to this age of doubt by weakening, concealing or abandoning the truth of the deity of Christ is to mistake the great need of our times. It is to seek to commend our Gospel by taking away from it the chief thing that men want, an assurance of sympathy and kinship with God."

The Reality of the Personality of Jesus Christ. This distinctive attribute of Christ—personality (a state of being which is distinguished by self-consciousness and self-determination)—cannot be doubted by any one who knows and accepts the teaching of the New Testament. Just as His humanity was real, and His deity was real, so His personality is real.

Christianity has an organization, Christianity has a doctrine, but the force of Christianity, that which made it move, and gave it power to move the world, was the Person at the heart of it, who gave vitality to the organization and reality to its doctrine; that is, Jesus Christ. Some modern teachers tell us that the root of Christianity is not a person, but a doctrine; that the person is only the prophet, the preacher, the publisher of the doctrine. We look in vain, in these new theories, for the Jesus we know. We find in them a man of singular perfection, a man of unique insight. We find a religious genius whom we cannot but revere. But the Incarnate Christ we do not find. The dis-

inctive feature of Christianity, according to those modern theories, is no longer Christ, but the teaching of Christ. Here are the two contending views. The one finds the basis of Christianity in a Person, the other, a teaching. The one traces Christianity back to God Himself made man—the Incarnation, the other derives it from a man whom God inspired.

The New Testament shows that the force that started the religion of Jesus was the Person of Jesus. Christ was His own Christianity. He was the core of His own Gospel, the fount and origin of its power, the secret of His ministry, the central word of His preaching, the essence of His message. That His own personality was the heart and summary of His completed work is evident from His own words in John 12:32: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The Gospel of Christ in the New Testament is a Gospel of a Person who saves men from sin. It is a living, transforming force that flows from the personality of Christ, who stands at the heart of it. Jesus makes the most unqualified demand on the loyalty of His disciples, and believes that the attraction of His personality will sustain their obedience. "Believe me," and "Follow me," He was ever saying, as if it were natural to trust Him and impossible to resist Him. Jesus Christ has more of that which may be called one's self than any moral or religious teacher with whom He may be compared. And this is so for the reason that He is Himself the incarnation of His message. It is not enough that certain abstract truths shall find expression in the

New Testament; attention is centred upon this Person of Christ.

If one were to eliminate the pronoun in the first person from the teaching of Christ, the teaching would have little or no meaning. Matthew represents Him as putting His authority over against that of the rabbis. "Ye have heard that it was said of them of old. . . . But *I* say unto you" (the *I* being emphatic). This formula is six times repeated in Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount. There was no compulsion in the teachings of Jesus but the compulsion of His personality and of the truth He taught. "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29). Jesus depended upon what He was and what He said, His own personality, to compel men. The New Testament nowhere represents Him as imposing a merely fiat authority upon men, an authority above reason, faith and love. His compulsion was an impulsion, operating through reason, faith and love. When many of His disciples were turning away from Him, He asked the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" And they said, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). It was the power, incarnate truth and love that held them. Love and loyalty were never forced from any one by Jesus. They are the instinctive response of the soul to His noble and loving personality.

The most compelling argument for the supremacy of Christ lies in what love and loyalty to Him has done for humanity. All attempts to resolve Him into a myth, a legend, an idea, have drifted

over the enduring reality of His personality and left not a rack behind. The result of idle criticism, the final verdict of enlightened common sense and sane scholarship, is that Christ is historical. A non-existent Christianity did not spring out of the air and create Christ. A real Christ, a genuine personality, appeared in the world and created the Christianity of the New Testament. The Christianity of the incarnation is a personal message, signed by the hand of a Father, conveyed to us by the hand of a Son. In Christianity the messenger is the message. The love which sent and the love which delivered it are the same. Christianity is a religion of a person, and that Person is Jesus Christ—one personality in two perfect natures—the human and the divine. Take away the personality of Christ, and you may have religion left, but it is not the Christian religion. You may have worship left, but it is not Christian worship. You may have ideals left, but not Christian ideals.

THE VALUE OF THE INCARNATION

What, then, is the value of the Incarnation, that fact which the New Testament makes so indisputably clear? Its worth is threefold—it makes God real; it brings God near to all men; it reveals the glory of God.

The Incarnation makes God real. All the abstract truths of Christianity might have come into the world in another form—and as a matter of fact many of them did come into the world in another form—but still the world might not have stirred—

the world did not stir. The truth did not make itself felt as a real and universal force in the lives of men until—

*“The Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought.”*
—Tennyson, *In Memoriam*.

Personality is the foundation of all reality, of all sensation and of all reflection, of all knowledge. Personality, subjective and objective, is the only thing that remains sure and inscrutable. Personality is the most real and substantial object of our knowledge. In an age hungering for reality, the Gospel of the Incarnation, if rightly apprehended and preached, satisfies this hunger as nothing else can do. Personality is the ultimate reality; it is also the final revelation, and the Incarnation is not only the fulfilment of an ancient hope, and the starting-point of a new life, it is the final assurance of the reality of the Fatherhood of God. The Incarnation makes the goodness of God visible, the holiness of God attractive, the tenderness of God actual, the responsiveness of God genuine, the sympathy of God natural, and the forgiveness, complete.

The Incarnation brings God near to all men. The religion of the Incarnation is the only one that brings God near to us, assures us of our kinship with Him and of His infinite personal, practical, helpful love for us. God not only became flesh in Christ, He dwells among us and

loves to have us speak to Him in our sorrows and in our songs. We are grateful for Browning's beautiful message:

*"God's in the heaven—
All's right with the world!"*

This is splendid poetry, but it is not the final word in religion. That we get from John's Gospel: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." No distant God can wipe away our tears, bear our burdens, purify our hearts and impart to us sufficiency of wisdom and strength for our daily service and sacrifice.

*"Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and Spirit with
Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than
hands and feet."*

The Incarnation reveals the glory of God. What is it that God glories in? Not in His power, nor in His wisdom, nor in His works, but in His love. God does not love us because Christ became incarnate; Christ became incarnate because God loved us. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Christianity, when true to the Incarnation, reveals as nothing else can reveal to men the fact that God cannot help loving them just because He is love; not because they are lovely or loving, but because love is the essence of His own nature. "I want," said the old philosopher, "a God who can speak to me." The Incarnation brings to every man, woman and child not

only a God who can speak to them, but a God who always speaks in terms of love (I John 9:10).

"If we search all space," says Luthardt, "we should discover only a Gospel of Power; if we surveyed all time, only a Gospel of Righteousness; only in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ do we learn of a Gospel of Love." The Incarnation is the guarantee to us of the Love, and the God of Love.

*"Subtlest thought shall fail and learning falter,
Churches change, forms perish, systems go,
But our human needs, they will not alter,
Christ no after age shall e'er outgrow.*

*"Yea, Amen! O changeless One, Thou only
Art life's guide and spiritual goal,
Thou the Light across the dark vale lonely,—
Thou the eternal haven of the soul."*

THE ESSENTIAL FACT: THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

CHRISTIANITY is history as well as theology and ethics. As history it rests on historic facts, such as the birth, the life, the work, the death, the burial, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus Christ.

While all of these facts are important and related to one another in the Gospels, it is upon the resurrection of Christ that Christianity bases all of its truths and rests all of its claims. Accordingly, we affirm that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the essential fact of Christianity, and in support of this affirmation we submit the teaching of Christ in the Gospels, the teachings in the Acts and the teachings of Paul.

Twice Christ offered His resurrection as proof of His claim of Messiahship: "Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . But he spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:18, 19, 21). "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee, but he answered and said unto

them, . . . There shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas, for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth " (Matt. 12:38-40).

Not only so, but Christ never spoke of His death apart from His resurrection. He never thought of His death as the end of His career; it was only an episode, and an episode opening up the way for the larger part He was to play as the spiritual leader of men in the Kingdom of God. When He spoke to the disciples of His approaching death, He gave them at the same time the assurance that He would rise again: " From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day " (Matt. 16:21). " And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him; and the third day he shall rise again " (Matt. 20:17-19; see also Mark 8:31; 9:31; and 10:34; Luke 9:22; 17:33).

In this assurance which Christ gave to His disciples—that death would not be the end of His career—more was involved than His mere faith that death could not interrupt the life He lived with His Father in heaven. He knew Himself to have been chosen and equipped by God to be the leader

in the new order which was to be ushered in, and He believed that after His death He would still be present with His disciples to guide the progress and destinies of the Kingdom of God. His resurrection meant more than personal immortality; it meant such continued activity for the Kingdom as is indicated in the command and promise recorded in Matt. 28:18-20: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

According to the teachings of the apostles in the book of Acts, witnessing to the resurrection of Christ was the primary requisite for apostleship: "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22).

The resurrection of Christ was the primary subject of apostolic teaching: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33). "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day and shewed him openly to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose

from the dead" (Acts 10:39-41). "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people" (Acts 13:29-31).

Jesus showed Himself alive after His passion, moreover, by many infallible proofs: "The captain of the temple came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:1-2).

In Romans 1:4 the Apostle Paul says that Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. In Philippians 1:10 he prays: "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection." In I Corinthians 15:1-20 he stakes all the truths and promises of Christianity on the resurrection of Christ: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not" (I Cor. 15:14-15).

It is evident from the teachings of the New Testament that the resurrection of Christ is the essential fact of Christianity. "The primary testimony of the apostles to Jesus," says Denney, "was their testimony to His resurrection. Except as risen and exalted they never preached Jesus at all. It was His resurrection and exaltation that made Him Lord and Christ and gave Him His place in their

faith and life. Nothing that Jesus said or did, apart from the resurrection, can justify or sustain the religious life we see in the New Testament. Those who reject the apostolic testimony at this point may indeed have a great appreciation for the memory of Jesus; they may reverence the figure preserved for us by the evangelists as the ideal of humanity, the supreme attainment of the race in the field of character, but they can have no relation to Jesus resembling that in which New Testament Christians lived and moved and had their being."

The New Testament makes it clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Christ in whom the apostles believed, the Christ who created Christianity and sustained it, the Christ who was the subject of their faith, and the object of their love, was the risen Christ, the Lord of glory. Observe, it was not Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, it was not even Jesus, the teacher in Galilee or the healer in Judea; it was not even the Christ crucified; it was the risen, living Christ, the Christ who said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you always," who transformed and inspired the apostles.

We heartily agree with Dr. James H. Snowden when he says: "The resurrection of Christ is the rock on which rests the central column that sustains the structure of historic Christianity. Remove this foundation, and the great fabric would fall into ruin."

Unbelievers, as well as believers, recognize that the resurrection of Christ is the essential fact of Christianity. Mecan, in his essay on the resurrec-

tion in the *Hibbert Journal*, says: "If the resurrection really took place, then Christianity must be admitted to be what it claims to be, a direct revelation from God. Nay, the resurrection is not merely a voucher for revelation, it may be said to be in itself a revelation." Strauss declares in his *Life of Jesus*: "The historical importance of the resurrection is such that without a belief in it a Christian community would hardly have come together."

Thus, then, believers and unbelievers agree that the resurrection of Christ is the essential fact of Christianity. No other fact in human history equals it or excels it in its vital importance to Christian faith and Christian life. No other fact carries so much in it that affects the character and destiny of the human race. New Testament Christianity stands or falls with it. If Christ be not risen, then His character is a wreck, His teaching is a wreck, and His work is a wreck; a wreck from which it is impossible to save anything worth advocating, worth having or worth keeping. There may be religion without the resurrection, but it is not, and it cannot be, the religion of the New Testament.

Now, we are dealing with the historic fact of the resurrection and accepting it as the fundamental fact upon which the life and power of New Testament Christianity rests. The tendency of our day is to distinguish the Easter faith and the Easter message from the Easter fact. The records of the New Testament show clearly that they were not unrelated in the apostolic days. To say that

the Easter faith produced the Easter message apart from the Easter fact is to reverse the teaching of the New Testament; to insist that Jesus merely rose again in the souls of His disciples, and that they alone gave birth to the stories of the empty grave and appearances of the Lord to His own, is to deny the testimony of the apostles and to rob apostolic Christianity of its acknowledged dynamic. We insist that the resurrection of Christ as a fact saturates and permeates the entire New Testament. The resurrection created the Christian Church, the Christian Sabbath, the New Testament. The risen Christ made Christianity. The resurrection of Christ is the most prominent, the most distinctly emphasized fact in the New Testament. The writers of the New Testament are unanimous in setting it forth as the one fact which gives Christians the right to be and to be believed. "Remove the resurrection from primitive Christian theology and its speech, and they would cease to be coherent or intelligible," says Principal Fairbairn. There may be a New Testament without the resurrection as a historical fact in it, but it is not the New Testament of the apostolic Church.

WHY CHRIST'S RESURRECTION IS CHRISTIANITY'S ESSENTIAL FACT

If it be true—and we are assured it is true—that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the essential fact of Christianity, why was it made to be so? What are the values of the resurrection to Christianity as we know it? Of these significant values of the resurrection let me now outline five.

The resurrection vindicates all the claims of Christ. What would be said of a leader or a teacher who encouraged men to give up all the prospects of their life by making them promises which he knew would never be realized? The unrisen Christ would be such a leader. On the other hand, the risen Christ makes good every promise; he proves that Jesus of Nazareth is what He claimed to be, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

The resurrection confirmed the faith of the disciples in the Person of Christ. Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Of course, Christ was the Son of God from all eternity. The resurrection did not make Him the Son of God. It revealed and confirmed the fact in the mind and heart of His disciples. "No resurrection," says Dr. Snowden, "means no divine Christ, but a risen Jesus means a divine Lord and a mighty Saviour."

The resurrection gives reality and power to the message of Christianity. All of the messages of Christianity centre in Christ. The Christmas message centres in His birth, the Good Friday message in His death, and the Easter message in His resurrection. Without the fact of the resurrection the Christmas message has no meaning, and the Good Friday message has no vitality. Instead of pointing to Christ as "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world," we should have to point to Him as the Lamb of God who was taken away by the sin of the world.

The resurrection manifests the power of Christianity. We need something to tell us that God can bring order out of chaos, and make right prevail. That something we have in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ burst forth from the grave in which they had laid Him under stone and seal, He proclaimed to men's senses as well as to men's consciences that the real law that rules the world is spiritual and not physical, and that if the sun of God's righteousness is at times overclouded in human history, it is certain to reappear. The resurrection of Christ assures us that whatever may be the perplexities of the hour or the age, the world is really under God's most loving, wise and overruling providence.

The resurrection assures us that the sacrifice of Christ was sufficient for all the needs of the world. "He was delivered for our offences," says Paul, "and was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:24). The Cross reveals the love of Christ for us; the resurrection, the power of Christ to save us and to satisfy us. The work of Christ in the Gospels is a unity. Incarnation is the starting-point, death the centre, and resurrection its completion. Christ became man that He might die; He died that He might redeem; He rose again as death's conqueror that He might guide and serve the children of man. The resurrection is the guarantee that Christ is not only willing, but that He is just as able as He is willing, to supply all of our needs. The resurrection is the final proof of God's redemptive purpose. The declaration that "Christ died for our sins and rose again" is the complete

Gospel. The resurrection calls us into possession of the fulness of God's truth that if "we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10).

The resurrection begets a resurrection life within us. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11).

The resurrection is more than a fact in history, or a doctrine in theology, or an ideal in ethics; it is a new life, a risen life, a victorious life, a life that death cannot touch and the grave cannot hold. It is a life which carries sacred obligations as well as sacred privileges. "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2).

It is evident from the teaching of the New Testament that the resurrection is not merely a remote fact in the past or something to be experienced in the distant future; it is a present, definite experience here and now. Some one has said: "Cease asking the question: 'Am I going to rise from the dead after I die?'" The only question that should concern us is this, Have I risen from the dead to-day?

The resurrection creates in us a risen life. This life is not something far away, beyond the stars; it is here and now. It delivers human love from

the bondage of despair and fills the soul with an undying hope. The consciousness of this new life led Paul to exclaim: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Peter 1:3). The resurrection not only creates in us a living hope, it feeds and nourishes that hope so that it becomes the dominant power and peace of the soul. "Join thyself," says Augustine, "to the living God, and thou wilt be eternal." The essential fact of Christianity is ever saying to the children of men: "Come, then, all ye who are in bondage to fear of death, and all ye who have laid away loved ones in sleep called death; come to the risen Christ, sit at His feet, believe in Him, be one with Him, and as He lives, ye shall live also and shall never die."

*"I tell you they have not died:
 Their hands clasp yours and mine;
 They are now but glorified,
 They have become divine.
 They live! They know! They see!
 They shout with every breath:
 All is Eternal Life—
 There is no death!"*

THE ESSENTIAL AUTHORITY: JESUS CHRIST

THE mind of our day demands a careful examination of every claim to authority. The area of this demand embraces every realm of thought and activity and life. Our age is hungry for certainty and authority. Authority is what the sociologist demands in order that he may have a sure basis for his program of co-operation. Authority is what the philosopher seeks in order that he may have a fixed point of departure and a rational process for his speculation. Authority is what the poet craves as he clings to—

*“The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.”*

This hunger may be noble. Indeed, it is noble if it springs from a passionate desire for truth, if it be the expression of that courageous spirit that will not be satisfied with any vision less than that of truth itself, and with any authority less than that which is supreme and final. The present age, we believe, is too wide awake to be fooled by any claim to authority, however ancient and vigorously that claim may be pressed, unless adequate

and satisfactory proof can be produced showing that the claim is based on fact and truth. Our age is not opposed to authority in religion, or anything else, for that matter; it simply wants to be sure that the ground for authority shall be real and valid, reasonable and well authenticated.

The need of authority applies to all realms of rational activity. Christianity, therefore, is not unusual when it appeals to authority. Its claim is in accord with the appeal of all intelligent and rational procedure in life. Without authority of some kind life must be meaningless, chaotic, insane. Without authority recognized and obeyed, civilization would be impossible and progress would cease. All that is demanded to-day is that religion, like everything else, should have authority for its doctrine and practise and that the grounds for accepting that authority should be valid.

There have been many attempts to fix the authority for Christianity. Some have insisted that it is to be found in the Church; some have declared that it is in the Bible; some have said that it is in the conscience alone. Authority in itself is an ambiguous word, and there is a sense in which it can rightly and fitly be attributed to the Church, to the Bible and to the conscience.

There are questions of order and discipline in which any church, like an organized society, has authority; there are questions of doctrine, and interpretation of doctrine, in which the Bible must be allowed authority, and there are questions of personal action and personal duty in which all will admit the authority of conscience. But in the

larger and deeper sense of the authority which brings certitude and assurance to the soul, we need the Christ who is the Lord and Life of the true Church, the Light of the Bible, and the final authority and guide of the conscience. Let us not, therefore, hesitate to pass through this confusion of claims and affirm that the essential authority for the Christian religion and for the Christian is Jesus Christ, as presented to us historically, especially in the four Gospels, and that this Christ is authenticated to our reason by the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in our own experience. Not the New Testament record, as such, but the historic, risen and living Christ is the final and essential authority of Christianity. In support of this affirmation we present the teachings of the New Testament itself.

As seen in the Gospels, authority was the mark of Christ to the men of His day who heard Him preach and teach: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). When the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees without having arrested Jesus, they said: "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46).

The note of authority impressed itself upon the inner circle of His disciples. When Christ asked the Twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Peter answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:67-68).

The last words of Jesus to His disciples ring out

the same note of authority: "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Thus the most valuable evidence, the evidence of Christ's disciples and the people who heard Him, points us directly and emphatically to Christ as final and supreme authority for Christianity.

Again, we find that instinctively and consciously all the other writers of the New Testament ascribe all authority in heaven and earth to Christ. Paul's summary of his teaching is the summary of the whole New Testament: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:23-24); "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). In other places he asserts the authority of Christ in these words: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him" (Eph. 1:10); "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11). "And having made peace," says Paul, "through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20).

Thus we see that the essential authority of Christianity is just Christ, the Christ of the New Testament, the incarnate, crucified, risen, living, indwelling, reigning Christ. By His word we test all doctrines, conclusions and commands. On His word we build all faith and all hope. His word is the source of authority in the Kingdom of God. As Christians, we should never forget or hesitate to appeal to it with untrembling certainty and positive conviction. If Christ did not know and preach the truth, then there is no truth that we Christians can know or preach. Unless we are sure of this, we better give up His name, and go out of business entirely. The rock of certainty upon which New Testament Christianity is founded is the mind of Christ as expressed in His living words and speaking life, and recorded for us in the records of the New Testament. Beyond this we need not go, and as Christians cannot go. The Christ of the New Testament is our final court of appeal on all that pertains to New Testament Christianity.

WHY CHRIST IS THE ESSENTIAL AUTHORITY OF CHRISTIANITY

The ultimate reasons for Christ's position as the supreme authority of Christianity do not rest, however, on the authority of the New Testament; they inhere in Jesus Christ Himself. We accept Him as our final court of appeal because of what He is.

His Divine Personality. The impression we get of Christ in the Gospels is not that of a lecturer giving formal instruction for a notebook preservation. He is a dominating personality, with a per-

fect vision of God, trying by sermon and parable, by miracle and sacrifice, by every means in His power, to make men see and love God. The personality of Christ is the supreme figure and fact in the Christianity of the New Testament. Christ Himself in the Gospels, not His teachings, is the revealer, the guide and the Saviour of men. Apart from His personality, His teachings have no reality and His works no power. It was not the pious devotion of the early Christians which made Him the light and life of men. The foundation upon which they built was not their own hopes and imaginations, it was Christ's own personality that won their hearts and commanded their lives. "Thou," said Peter, "hast the words of eternal life." Christ Himself was their sole authority and the standard by which they measured all truth. The keynote of Christ's life in the New Testament is absolute mastery. He moved in the realm of spiritual things as one who had "all authority." There was that about His "Verily, verily I say unto you," which He used more than seventy times according to the Gospel records, which carried conviction and settled controversy. It was what He was, rather than what He said or what He did, that led men to accept Him as their Saviour and their Lord. They recognized that He was human in all of His divineness and divine in all of His humanness. "God over all and blessed forever," and therefore the essential authority of Christianity.

His Perfect Human Knowledge and Sympathy. There is no factor in human history that He does not know and understand. There is no bitter cry

of the human heart that He does not hear. There is no fear in men's souls that He does not feel. There is no passion, however wild and ungovernable, that He does not divine; no beauty of the human soul that He does not appreciate; no chapter in human sorrow that He does not read, from the first seething, sobbing syllable to the last; no chord in the universal heart of mankind which His fingers cannot find and touch. He was and is and ever will be "the Son of Man, as well as the Son of God." It was the Son of Man, whom human eyes beheld and human hands touched, who has won and held the hearts and minds of men in all ages. Men find that He knows them at their best and at their worst, but still loves them, and hence they accept Him as the essential authority in Christianity, the only authority that can say to them: "My son, thy sins are all forgiven thee . . . go in peace."

His Perfect Character. Christ's moral supremacy has been recognized by men everywhere and in all the centuries since His birth. In all schools of thought and in all walks of life we find men perplexed and troubled turning wistful eyes to Christ, as though He held the golden key to the problems which press so heavily on modern life. Anxious souls troubled and disturbed about modern criticism look to Him, believing that there is still in Him some power which will lift men's thoughts into a realm of faith, unhaunted by fear of what may befall should some perplexing critical problem defy solution. Men engaged in daily toil turn from the cheap remedies of shallow talkers to Jesus who

worked in Nazareth, believing that from Him will come the spirit and the teaching which will solve their social and economic difficulties. Everywhere there are signs of a growing confidence that there are in Christ still unexplored riches of unused power which can avail to help in the complicated problems of individual, national and international life. In Christ we find one who appears to be so near to us and yet so far above us that He awes us even while He attracts us, one who convinces us of our faults even while He compels by His sympathy, one who as our ideal rebukes our shortcomings and yet who is so complete a revelation of forgiveness that no sinner shrinks from His side. Centuries of growing and imperious needs have left His power unexhausted, for still the perplexed, the aspiring, the weary and the bravely patient, the souls who feel their weakness and souls who long to save their fellow-men, turn to Him, believing that He holds in His pierced hands the secret of life and the solution of all our world problems.

Christ was not merely a commentator on truths already revealed. He revealed new truths. His teaching was more than an exposition: it was the text. He replaced the temporal by the eternal, the figurative by the factual, the literary by the spiritual, the imperfect by the perfect, the false by the true. He not only taught truth, He was the truth He taught. What He said was meant to be its own evidence. His method was not apologetic, it was declarative. "He argued not but preached, and conscience did the rest."

Here, then, is Jesus Christ presenting to the

world a character which exercises a strong and dominant influence over men; not over the ignorant and foolish, not over the naturally devout only, but over men who have sought to free their minds of prejudice and who have prided themselves in their independence of traditional judgments. With whatever difference of view we may regard Christ, we must admit that He holds the supreme place in Christianity. He gives wider scope to men's thoughts; He stimulates their moral capacities, and His character is a perpetual inspiration and challenge to man's conduct. Jesus Christ is not merely a moral teacher and a great example; He is the incarnation of the character of God; and for this reason He is the essential authority of Christianity.

His Unconquerable Spirit. Does the sense of guilt stand in the way of future effort? He says: "I have power on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10). Does the soul feel dead and hopeless under the burden of evil habits? He says: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Do the works of a true and vital righteousness seem far beyond our power? He says: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; . . . lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20). "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). The Spirit of Christ is summed up in His own words: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Christ never faltered

in His loyalty to God's will and the needs of humanity, even though His course involved the garden and all of its sorrows, the Cross with all of its agonies, and the grave with all of its horrors. The unwavering Spirit of Christ in the permanent and worldwide diffusion, and ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of truth and holiness and love is unquestionable evidence of the charm of His Gospel, the divinity of His life, and the right of His authority.

Communicated by His influence to the hearts of His disciples, this spirit has been a force of incalculable potency and inspiration in the lives of men. The noblest deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice and liberation have been wrought in the strength of it. The greatest conquests over self and sin, the supreme victories of righteousness and love and peace in human hearts have been wrought through this unconquerable spirit of Christ. The consciousness of the reality and power of this Spirit led Paul to exclaim: "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:31-32).

"Back to the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ," says Dr. van Dyke, "back to a faith that dissolved doubts and creates an inspiration that conquered difficulties, back to the facts that lie behind the definitions, back to the Person who embodies truth, back to the record and reflection of that which the apostles heard, and saw with their eyes and looked upon, and their hands handled of the word of life"—in a word, back to

the only Christ we know, the Christ of the Scriptures, for the final authority of Christianity. Christianity has rested, and it must continue to rest, on the personal authority of Jesus Christ if the Christianity of the twentieth century is to speak to men with authority. There is no substitute for the authority of Christ in the Christianity of the New Testament.

*“ Not what, but Whom!
For Christ is more than all the creeds,
And His full life of gentle deeds
Shall all the creeds outlive.
Not what I do believe, but Whom!
Who walks beside me in the gloom?
Who shares the burden wearisome?
Who all the dim way doth illume,
And bids me look beyond the tomb,
The larger life to live?
Not what I believe, but Whom!
Not what, but Whom! ”*

—JOHN OXENHAM.

THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTER: A REVELATION

OUR conception of the essential character of Christianity depends on our authority, and hence we hasten to state again that from our point of view Jesus Christ is the final authority on all matters pertaining to the Christian religion, and the New Testament is the only authentic record of the facts and truths of the Christian message.

What, then, is the essential character of Christianity according to the teachings of the New Testament? By "essential" we mean that without which Christianity is not Christian. Fortunately for us, the New Testament is not silent nor indefinite on this vital question. It is clear and positive and consistent in its teaching. The writers of the New Testament insist that Christianity is not a mere discovery of a few devout seekers of truth, or a brilliant invention of a gifted young Jew of Nazareth, who in a moment of spiritual exaltation dared to think of God as His Father and man as His brother and died a martyr's death in loyalty to these convictions.

Nor is Christianity an induction reached by the careful study of reverend and profound minds,

gathering a truth here and a truth there from the religious ideas of Egypt and India, Greece and Rome.

The New Testament asserts the reverse of all these, and affirms clearly and constantly that Christianity in its essential character is a distinct and definite revelation. In a word, it is a message from God Himself, making known to men that which they can absolutely depend upon but which they could never find out by their own natural and unaided faculties.

Of course, it is true that every religion purports to be a revelation. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament remind us that "God has not left himself without a witness." When, therefore, we say that the Christian message is a revelation, we are not making a statement unreasonable in itself, or making a claim for the Christian message that is peculiar to it. But the New Testament does not stop here. It goes farther, and insists that Christianity in its essential character is a distinct revelation of God in and through a person; and that person is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of man, and the Saviour of the world.

This is the essence of Christianity and constitutes its essential character. Was not this what Christ Himself meant when He said: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25)? And was not this what Paul meant when he wrote, in his letter to the Ephesians, these words: "Whereby when ye read ye may under-

stand my knowledge, in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:4-5)? Such passages as these, and many others that might be quoted, make it clear that Christianity is not only a revelation in the general sense of this term, but that in its essential character it is a special, distinct and definite revelation.

It is not enough to say that Christianity is a revelation, as some are doing to-day, and thereby classify it as on a par with the so-called revelations of other religions. Loyalty to the New Testament makes it necessary to go farther, and to maintain that Christianity in its essential character is a direct piece of supernatural information concerning God and His relations to man revealed in Jesus Christ. No one who knows New Testament Christianity will doubt for a moment that it is rooted and grounded in a Revealer; and that Revealer is Jesus Christ.

Apart from Christ, Christianity has no distinct light, no distinct life, no distinct foundation, no distinct power, no distinct love. Eliminate Christ from Christianity, and its essential character disappears, its words are empty, and its vitality and reality vanish. In these days when there is a serious and sustained attempt to remove Christ from Christianity, when we are being told that "God's relation to us would be simple enough if Jesus

Christ had kept out," we need to turn back again to the only authentic record we have of the Christianity of Christ and there learn that Christianity, when true to its essential character, is not a discovery or an invention, nor yet an induction, but is a clear and definite self-revelation of God in and through Jesus Christ. This makes Christianity more than a system of ethics, though it has revolutionized ethics; more than a method of worship, though it has furnished a new interpretation of worship and given it a new character; more than a philosophy of life, though it has given it a new interpretation. In its final terms, Christianity is a revelation of a new life founded on certain historic facts—"that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3-4). Take these facts away, and you rob Christianity of its essential character; you make it merely a message of "good advice," rather than a message of "good news" to a sinful, sorrowing, suffering world.

Granted that Christianity in its essential character is a definite and distinct revelation, why do we believe it to be so? Consider, then, five cogent facts:

Christianity gives us the highest known conception of God. The idea of God always determines the character of religion, and nations are always like the God they worship. The ethical and moral life of a people rises out of their conception of God. To the Jew, God was a judge; to the Greek, God was a teacher; to the Roman, God was a ruler. To

those who receive and believe the Christian message, God is the Father, who is everlasting in His love. God in the New Testament is first and foremost a Father, then a Sovereign, anxious to assert His authority, not for the sake of the law, but to save His children. God, the Father, in the Christian message, loves man in spite of his sin, in the midst of his guilt, loves that He may save; and even should He fail in saving, He does not cease to love.

This conception of God is not found in any other religion, and it is our first reason for believing that the Christian message in its essential character is a distinct and definite revelation unknown to all other religions. It is true that there are seven references to the thought of God as a Father in the Old Testament, but in five of these passages He is represented as the Father of the nation, while in Christianity, as revealed in the New Testament, God is called Father about two hundred times. A little blind girl, on being told that the Being she worshipped was called Father, said: "I did not know His name, but I knew *Him*." Christianity reveals to men not only the name of God, but the nature of God, which is love, and the character of God, which is perfect. If Christianity had given the world nothing but this one conception, it would be entitled to be regarded as a special revelation to mankind.

Christianity places the greatest valuation on man. The extraordinary elevation of the idea of God in Christianity does not stand alone. It affects every region of thought, feeling and relation-

ship. The first thing it touches and ennobles is the worth of man. Man must conceive of himself rightly in order to respect himself, and his progress may best be measured by his successive ideas of his own nature. Man in Christianity is primarily spirit, for God is spirit. He is more than a body, more than a mind, more than a conscience, more than a will; he is a soul; and Jesus Christ set such a high value on man's soul that He died for it.

This is the essence of Christianity and our second reason for believing that it is a distinct revelation. No other religious message tells of a God who died for man. No other religious message has a Calvary in it.

Christianity offers the only solution of the world's three unsolved problems—the problem of sin, the problem of suffering, and the problem of sorrow. To each of these problems the Christian message gives a definite and satisfying answer. Its answer to the problem of sin is: Forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Its answer to the problem of suffering is that suffering is discipline for the sake of character. Its answer to the problem of sorrow is the assurance of the Divine Comforter. By satisfying the three passionate desires of the human soul—the desire of pardon for the past, power for the present and peace for the future—Christianity proves beyond a doubt that it is a distinct and special revelation. No other religion has offered the world a solution for these problems. In no other religions do we find such words as these: “Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee;” “thy faith hath made thee whole;” “lo, I

am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Christianity makes known to men the best uses of life. Life, in Christianity, is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end, and that end is the glory of God through saving and serving men. Sacrifice and service are the keynotes of Christianity. The servants of the world are its real sovereigns to-day. Christianity teaches men that the best use of life is found not in self-indulgence, or in self-culture, or in self-aggrandizement, but in self-sacrifice. No other religion tells men: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:25-26).

Christianity provides men with a comforting and satisfying view of death and the hereafter. Death, according to Christianity, is not defeat, it is victory; it is not loss, it is gain; it is not a curse, it is a blessing; it is not going from this world with its home of love into a homeless world without love; it is not going from the presence of a loved father here, into a world that is fatherless. According to Christianity, death is merely going to be forever with those who have loved the Father and have gone on before. One seeks in vain to find in any other religion such comforting words as these: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And

if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

"Draw a line," says Bruce Barton, "through human history at the time of the birth of Christ, and compare the last words of men who died before that date with the words of those who passed on afterward. The contrast is illuminating. Before He came, men went shuddering into oblivion. After Him, the great souls of the world passed through the gate as conquerors, merely changing their armour in preparation for a more glorious crusade. Sir Henry Havelock, approaching his last hour, called his son to the bedside. 'Come, my son,' he cried, 'and see how a Christian can die.' The object of Christianity is to teach men better how to live; but it would have justified itself a thousandfold had it done nothing except to teach men how worthily to die: not as victims, not as players in a game where all must finally lose; not as angels, but as men—faithful, self-confident and unafraid."

In the last analysis, Christianity is a revelation, in Christ, of the God of salvation and the salvation of God. Face the facts of life, and Christianity assumes a momentous significance for the individual and for the world. When true to its essential character it reveals to men not only God as their Father, but Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and the Holy Spirit as their Comforter. If Christianity is to retain its revealing, saving and enabling power in our day, it must hold fast to the great historic facts of the birth, life, ministry, passion, death,

resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, essentially as they are now narrated in the New Testament, and also to the great spiritual fact that in the God whom Christ has revealed to us, there is abundant forgiveness for all the past, and abundant life for all the future. Anything less than this is not true to the essential character of Christianity as given to us in the New Testament.

THE ESSENTIAL TRUTH: UNION WITH CHRIST

IN religion, as in astronomy, everything depends on what you make the centre. Ancient astronomy was all astray because it had a false centre; it made the earth the centre of the solar system, and not the sun, and hence most of its calculations were wrong, and its deductions valueless.

Religion, and especially Christianity, has suffered much from mistaken centres, an error which has always resulted in an undue emphasis on non-essential truth. Thoughtful men and women today recognize the evils of this mistake, and they are insisting as never before on knowing and emphasizing the central and essential truth of Christianity. All loyal adherents of Christianity should welcome this demand, and all teachers of Christianity should seek to meet it fairly and fearlessly. What, then, is the essential truth of Christianity? On the authority of the teachings of the New Testament we affirm that union with Christ is the essential truth of Christianity.

For support of this affirmation we cite the teachings of Christ, of Paul, of Peter, and of John:

Christ made union with Himself the condition

for receiving "everlasting life": "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16); the basis of discipleship: "If you abide in my word, then are ye my disciples" (John 8:31); the ground of Christian hope and comfort: "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1); and the sole requirement for receiving all the benefits and blessings of the Gospel: "Abide in me . . . for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-5). The teaching of Christ may be summed up in five direct commands: (1) "Come unto me" as a Redeemer; (2) "Believe in me" as a Revealer; (3) "Learn of me" as a Teacher; (4) "Follow me" as a Leader; (5) "Abide in me" as a Lifegiver.

Paul made union with Christ the cause of his conversion: "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17); the source of his Christian life: "I live, yet not I, but Christ within me" (Gal. 2:20); the ground of his freedom from condemnation: "There is, therefore, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:7); the power that makes man a new creature: "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed, and behold, all things have become new" (II Cor. 5:17); the bond that unites believers: "But he that is joined with the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor. 6:17); the supreme desire for his fellow-disciples: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19); and also the assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God: "For I am persuaded that

neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord " (Rom. 8:38-39).

Peter makes union with Christ the means by which believers are partakers of the nature of Christ: " Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me " (II Peter 1:14); of the sufferings of Christ: " But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy " (I Peter 4:13); and of the glory of Christ: " The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed " (I Peter 5:1).

John makes union with Christ the secret of confidence: " And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming " (I John 2:28); the source of power over sin: " Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not " (I John 3:6); the witness of life eternal: " He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son " (I John 5:10); and the assurance of the Spirit: " Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit " (I John 4.13).

From this review of the teachings of the New Testament the following facts are evident:

Union with Christ is the essential truth of Christianity. No outward vision of Christ, no amount of second-hand knowledge concerning Him, will avail anything unless the revelation of His presence and power has taken place in ourselves. More important than the revelation of Christ to man is the revelation of Christ in man, for not until the outward revelation of the Scripture has become a subjective experience, not until the Christ of the Bible has become inwardly and personally known, not until the inner eye beholds His beauty and the inner ear hears His voice, is Christianity anything more than an empty form. The New Testament writers recognize that there are external facts concerning Christ, and there are inward facts. There is a historical Christ, and there is an indwelling Christ. There is the Christ known to the general outward history of the world, and there is the Christ known to the spiritual consciousness of men. As wise men we must seek to know Christ in both of these aspects.

We heartily agree with the late Principal Fairbairn when he says: "The most distinctive and determinative element in modern religion is what we may term a new feeling for Christ." This new feeling is manifesting itself to-day in a growing and persisting demand, especially in the rising generation, for a personal and conscious relation with Christ, not only as a fact in history, or a doctrine in theology, or an ideal in ethics, or an idea in sociology, but as an inward and impelling force,

dominating and unifying all the powers of their being, and making them active in every service that promotes the Kingdom of God. Everywhere there are signs that thoughtful men and women are coming to see that Christianity is nothing if it is not everything, and it is everything only when it is a spirit, which living within awakens, develops, satisfies and influences the whole life of man. This insistent demand of our day can be met only by a renewed emphasis and constant proclamation of union with Christ as the essential truth of Christianity.

The teachings of the New Testament make it clear that all the benefits and blessings of Christianity are ours only as we are "in Christ." We receive them and enjoy them only in so far as we are united to Christ, as the branch is united to the vine, and as the hand is united to the body. Here we enter upon "the deep things of God." Here we stand face to face with what Paul calls the mystery of Christ. Yet this mystery, which the thoughtless and superficial would regard as a metaphysical speculation, again and again has had a tremendous and practical effect. The life and work of all the apostles, of all the martyrs, and all the missionaries of the Christian Church is the product of this mystical power in Christianity. Union with Christ makes all things new, fills life with a joyous sense of emancipation, lifts the load of self and frees us from the bondage of statutory religion by enabling us to live in a spirit, not of fear, but of sonship, not of aspiration, but possession. "Therefore, let no man glory in men: for all things are yours;

whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's " (I Cor. 3:21-23).

Union with Christ is more than union with a system of doctrine, more than union with an organized church, more than union with a great teacher, more than union with an ideal man. Union with a system of doctrine will make you a theologian, but not a Christian; union with a church will make you a church member, but not a Christian; union with a teacher will make you a scholar, but not a Christian; union with an ideal man will make you an idealist, but not a Christian. A man apart from Christ is not a Christian, cannot be a Christian; he loses Christianity as absolutely as a hand would lose its use and its meaning if it were cut off from the body. What Christianity offers a man is salvation not apart from Christ, but "in Christ." The New Testament writers insist that Christ wants to be more directly and vitally related to us than we can be to any other.

Union with Christ is based on the principle of one personality rooted and grounded in another personality so that it influences and determines the trend and colour of that life. This principle is not altogether in the clouds. Wherever I turn I find illustrative instances; teacher and scholar, master and disciple, friend and friend. I find what is called the "Jefferson School," a body of politicians whose political life is primarily rooted in the personality of Thomas Jefferson, from whom they derive the colour of their thought, the spirit of their

policy and the character of their ideas. They are "in Thomas Jefferson." So we may speak of people to whom Ruskin is master in literature as being "in Ruskin," or people to whom Turner is master in painting as being "in Turner," to whom Browning is master in poetry as being "in Browning." All of these are illustrations of the principle that one man's life often dominates and moulds other men's lives. True, this principle is mystical, but it is also real, just as real love is mystical; but it is also real and practical, yea, the most real and effective force in the world.

Systems of doctrine, external organizations, carnal commandments, and material sacrifices will pass away, but with Christianity comes that which abides, a union with a person, not a mere principle; a union with a Saviour, not a mere system; a union with a power, not a mere program;—in a word, a union with a personal, crucified, risen, divine, omnipresent Christ, who is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever" (Heb. 13:8), a Christ who said: "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). New Testament Christianity lives and moves and has its being in Christ, and in Christ alone.

Union with Christ is not only the essential truth of Christianity; it is the truth which differentiates Christianity from all other religions. Sir Monier Williams, one of the greatest authorities on Oriental religions, declared that union with Christ is the doctrine which differentiates Christianity from

every known religion. No Chinaman imagines for a moment that there is any vital union between himself and Confucius. No Buddhist dreams of such organic fellowship with Buddha. No Mohammedan would dare to say: "I live, yet not I, but Mohammed liveth in me." But Paul does say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," and when he says it he means it to be taken as the deepest and most real fact in his spiritual life, and not as a mere metaphor or figure of speech.

Christianity in the New Testament always consists of union and communion with Christ. We very heartily agree with Professor H. R. Mackintosh, of New College, Edinburgh: "Whereas every other historic and prophetic religion makes progress by transcending its founder, Christianity has grown in life and power in exact proportion as from time to time it recovers touch with Christ, submits more loyally to His will, and accepts with deeper gratitude the life of sonship He imparts."

Union with Christ is the only adequate dynamic of Christianity. Union with Christ is in Christianity what steam is in mechanics, the power which impels and compels. The Christianity of Christ is not only a program, it is power. It is the distinction of Christianity that it works, and the power that makes it work is the indwelling Christ. "And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him they said, John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he

that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached " (Luke 7:19-22).

Twentieth century Christians do not need morals, they need motives; they are sick of speculation; they long for action. Our moral machinery is complete but motionless. The crying need of our day is a Christianity that will inspire men with a genuine passion for holiness and a constraining motive for service.

*" 'Tis one thing to know and another to practise,
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already."*

Union with Christ furnishes this motive. "He that abideth in me beareth forth much fruit" (John 15:5). This is just the type of Christianity which union with Christ has always created.

It was union with Christ that made the apostolic Church a converting, transforming, victorious Church; it was union with Christ that made the apostles invincible; it was union with Christ that made Luther and Calvin and Knox unconquerable; it was union with Christ that made those missionaries in China—Hodge and Pitkin and Williams—unafraid. It is union with Christ that fires

and fills our missionaries to-day, both at home and abroad, with a willingness to face any danger and a spirit to make any sacrifice for Christ, for country and for the world.

No distant Christ can wipe away our tears, bear our burdens, purify our hearts, and impart unto us sufficiency of wisdom and strength for our daily service and sacrifice. Until the personal presence of Christ, through union with Him, becomes the animating fact of our consciousness, no real test has been made of His power to quicken, to save, and to comfort. Union with Christ always brings with it a holy impulsion to complete consecration. It supplies not only the outward model, but an inward motive; not only an inward authority, but an inward constraint that fills us with a consuming passion to do His will in all things. From a life of glad self-devotion to His interests, nothing can hold those back who are "in Christ." Those who are "in Christ" have a message to proclaim and testimony to give. That message is found in His own words: "Abide in me." That testimony, too, is found in His own words: "For without me ye can do nothing."

*"I have a life with Christ to live;
But, ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date?
I have a life in Christ to live,
I have a death in Christ to die;
And must I wait till science give
All doubts a full reply?"*

*"Nay, rather while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
Take but the lowest seat,
And hear Thine awful voice repeat,
In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet:
'Come unto Me and rest;
Believe Me and be blest.'"*

THE ESSENTIAL GIFT: LIFE

RELIGIONS, like individuals, may be divided in two classes—those which give and those which receive. The Christian religion takes the highest place among those which give. It is pre-eminently a religion of giving. Christ, the founder of Christianity, defined it in terms of giving: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16); “If ye, then, being evil,” He said, “know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matt. 7:11). He insisted that it is more blessed to give than to receive: “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35); “Give,” He said, “and it shall be given unto you” (Luke 6:38).

The Apostle Paul, too, defined Christianity in terms of giving: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). It is evident from the teachings of the New Testament that giving is the fact that lends

distinction to Christianity, and gives it its place apart among all the other great world-religions. These religions insist on what man must give in order to win favour with God; Christianity proclaims what God has given in order to win man. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "I believe," said John Ruskin, "that the root of every schism and heresy from which the Christian Church has suffered has been the effort to earn salvation rather than to receive it, and the one reason why preaching is so ineffective is that it calls on men oftener to work for God than to behold God working for them." The first call of Christianity is not to bid us renew the scattered energies of the soul and "do our best,"—rather is it to bid us humble ourselves and receive God's best gift. The New Testament not only asserts that Christianity is a religion of giving, it makes it clear that life is the essential gift of Christianity. In support of this affirmation, we cite the teachings of Christ and of the Apostle John.

First of all, Christ defined Himself in terms of life: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6); "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25); "I am the bread of life" (John 6:48). Christ also defined His mission in terms of life: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10); "And I will give unto them eternal life" (John 10:28); "Even so must the Son of man be

lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:15; see also John 3:16-36); "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life" (John 17:2); "Whosoever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life" (John 6:54).

Again, He defined His sacrifice in terms of life: "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep" (John 10:11); "I lay down my life for my sheep" (John 15:11); "I am come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give my life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). Christ stated His message in terms of life: "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

The Apostle John, too, defines Christianity in terms of life: "And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (I John 5:11-13).

It is evident from this survey that life is the essential gift of Christianity. But why is life the essential gift of Christianity? There is an abundance of reasons.

The life which Christianity gives meets and satisfies the primary and elemental need of all men—spiritual life. Human life is, roughly speaking, threefold, bodily, mental and spiritual. We have bodily needs; we crave food, warmth, light, and

rest. We have mental needs; we crave truth and ideals. We have soul needs; we crave forgiveness, peace, fellowship, worship, love, and spiritual life. The satisfaction of bodily needs gives us pleasure; the satisfaction of mental needs gives us happiness; the satisfaction of our soul needs gives us peace and joy and power. All of man's needs are real and vital, but his supreme need is his soul need. Until this is satisfied, he can only exist. He does not and he cannot live. Christ made it plain that existence is physical, and dependent upon the energy of matter; life is spiritual, and dependent upon the energy of the soul. The life Christianity gives creates and nourishes soul-energy, and thus transforms existence into life, that Christ calls eternal and everlasting. Is not this what Christ meant when He said, "He that believeth in me shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death into life" (John 5:24)? The distinctive gift of Christianity is neither health of the body, nor culture of the mind, but life for the soul.

Life delivers man from the tyranny of circumstances. Man has an inveterate tendency to confound life with its environment. He has identified life with "meat and drink." Against this empty and unworthy conception of life Christ constantly lifted His voice in protest. "A man's life," He said, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:25); "Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?" (Matt. 6:63). "Labour not," said He, "for the meat which perishes" (John 6:27).

Christianity, through its gift of life, not only protests against the materialistic degradation of life; it frees man from its deadening and blighting power, by convincing him that he can live like His Father in heaven. When one thinks of life in the soul of man as one thing, and in God as another, he has lost the key to the teaching of Christ. Nothing deserves the name of life in us that cannot be affirmed by God. Life, in the Christian sense, in the soul of man is the tide of the divine life flowing, as it has opportunity, through the narrow channels of human nature. Was not this what Christ meant when He said: "As the living Father hath sent me, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:57)? Life, from Christ's point of view, is a condition of the soul which makes it possible for man not only to live for God, and with God, but like God. Surely this was what Christ had in mind when He said: "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Life unifies and strengthens all of man's powers. It quickens the soul, fertilizes the mind, softens the heart, purifies the conscience, and stimulates the will. It gives a unity and continuity to personality. It is not a series of isolated springs, but an ocean laving every shore. It has its source in Christ, "in whom was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). The life Christianity gives strengthens, and gladdens, and inspires all the forces of the personality of men, and guides them into effective service for God and for man. Mrs. Annie Besant, the noted agnostic, makes the

following sad and striking confession in her autobiography:

“Even more and more had been growing on me the feeling that something more than I had was needed for the cure of social ills. The socialist position sufficed on the economic side, but where to gain the inspiration, the motive which should lead to the realization of the brotherhood of man? Our efforts to really organize bands of unselfish workers had failed. Much, indeed, had been done, but there was not a real movement of self-sacrificing devotion in which men worked for love’s sake only, and asked but to give, not to take. Where was the material for the nobler social order, where the hewn stones for the building of the temple of man? A great despair would oppress me as I sought for such a movement and found it not.”

Mrs. Besant was looking for the right thing, but in the wrong way, and in the wrong place. The imperative need of the soul and of society is the life Christianity gives. It, and it alone, can furnish the inspiration and motive which will make men like Christ, earth like heaven, and kingdoms of this world the Kingdom of God.

Life determines character and destiny. “Enter, ye, in at the straight gate,” said Christ, “for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; but straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life” (Matt. 7:13-14). What Christianity offers man is not heaven, but life, eternal life, everlasting life, abundant life, life that cannot

be lost. "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). This life is not something we are to receive in the future, it is something we have now, and forever. We heartily agree with Dr. Theodore F. Munger when he says: "Having life in abundance, there is no break in its currents at death, there is no waste of even endless ages. If joined to the divine life, every change must be more life. If one with Christ, how can it be that we shall not share His destiny and go from world to world in His company? Because we are one with the *Life*, death has no more dominion over us. With such hopes let us await our time of departure. With such hopes let us lay our dead in the grave, not dead, not here, for they are risen."

The life which Christianity gives is nothing less than God's own strong, sweet life. It inspires and transforms the soul and gives unto it a secret power which becomes the energy and mainspring of God-like character and service. This life is the basis of a deep and real knowledge and fellowship with God. "This is life eternal," said Christ, "that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The life Christianity gives lightens the heaviest loads and sweetens the inequalities of experience. It inspires the greatest enterprises and kindles the desire for higher things. It aspires upwards and will not be restrained by the things of earth.

The life Christianity gives makes religion an

experience first, and a creed afterwards; an inspiration and not a restraint; a program for the present, not an insurance for the future. The Christian life is the life of wide horizons and large outlooks.

The life of Christ in a Christian claims all that is best. Christ's life in us does not impoverish, but enriches our life; it deepens it and broadens it. It does not make man less of a man, but more of a man.

This possession of the Christ-life means an emancipation from the transient and insignificant, and an association with the permanent and the eternal; the clarification of thought and the amplification of duty, and the purification of desire, which can issue in nothing less than the consecration of the will. The essential gift of Christianity gives men command of themselves and of all things which pertain to their character and destiny. In Christianity "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:21-23).

When Dwight L. Moody was preaching in Glasgow, a young mechanic, coming home from work, forced his way into the end of the crowded hall. As he entered, Mr. Moody was speaking and holding out his hand in his earnest way in the direction of the young workman. "Will you take eternal life as a gift?" said Mr. Moody. The young man felt as if the question were addressed directly and personally to him. "Eternal life as

a gift! " he exclaimed, stepping back involuntarily, " take as a gift? I should be a great fool if I did not."

*" I know no life divided,
O Lord of life, from Thee;
In Thee is life provided,
For all mankind and me;
I know no death, O Jesus,
Because I live in Thee;
Thy death it is which frees us
From death eternally."*

THE ESSENTIAL DEMAND: FAITH

THE importance of knowing the essential demand of Christianity grows out of the confused and contradictory answers given in our day to this vital question by Christian teachers. Some tell us that Christianity is the fulfilment of duty. This settles it in the conscience, and thus morality becomes the essential demand. Others insist that Christianity is the acceptance of certain doctrines. This locates it in reason, and so knowledge becomes the essential demand. Still others argue that Christianity is a state of feeling. This settles Christianity in the heart, and thus emotion becomes the essential demand. The philosopher, the theologian, the mystic can each make a good case, for each does without doubt present a phase of Christianity; no one of the three can exclude the other two. Nor yet can all three include a completely rounded New Testament Christianity. Morality, knowledge and emotion are the favourite forms and customs of Christianity. As usual, we must turn to Jesus Christ for a full and final answer to this practical question, and to our textbook, the New Testament, for the teaching of Jesus Christ.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST ON THE ESSENTIAL DEMAND OF CHRISTIANITY

Christ's appeal was always for faith: "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22); "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1); "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14:11).

Christ's commendations were usually for faith: "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matt. 8:10); "O woman, great is thy faith" (Matt. 15:28).

His condemnations were usually for the lack of faith: "And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:40); "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. 6:30). Christ prayed that the faith of His disciples might not fail: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32).

Christ's healing benefits were dependent upon faith: "He said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36); "And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague" (Mark 5:34); "Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29).

Christ made faith the medium of salvation:

“ And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace ” (Luke 7:50); the power to do the work of God: “ Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that he believe on him whom he hath sent ” (John 6:29); the secret of doing the impossible: “ If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you ” (Matt. 17:20).

THE TEACHING OF PAUL ON THE ESSENTIAL DEMAND

In Romans 5:1 Paul says, We are justified by faith; in II Corinthians 5:7, We walk by faith; in Acts 26:18, We are sanctified by faith; in Galatians 2:20, We live by faith. In I Corinthians 16:13 he pleads with Christians to “ stand fast in the faith; ” Galatians 3:11, “ The just shall live by faith; ” Galatians 3:26, “ For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; ” in I Corinthians 2:5 he prays, That their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; in Ephesians 2:17, That Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; in Philippians 1:25, “ I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith. ”

THE ESSENTIAL DEMAND IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 11:1-40 of Hebrews insists that faith was the source of all the power and secret of all the achievements of the heroes and heroines of Old

Testament history. Chapter 11:7 defines faith as the power that gives reality to unseen things, and in Chapter 11:6 the writer asserts that without faith it is impossible to please God.

THE TEACHING OF JOHN IN HIS EPISTLES

The first epistle of John speaks as follows regarding the essential demand of Christianity: "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ" (3:23); "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (5:4, 5); "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (5:10); "These things have I written unto you that ye might believe on the name of the Son of God" (5:13).

Thus it is evident that the New Testament abounds in teachings which directly emphasize the virtue and indispensableness of faith. When Christ made His appeal to the individual, He always addressed Himself to faith. Faith was the first and last demand He made on men, the word was always on His lips. It was the core of His thinking and the keynote of His preaching. The apostles insisted that faith was the root of Christian salvation, Christian character, Christian service and Christian hope. It is not overstating the fact to say that the essential demand of New Testament Christianity is faith. There may be religion without faith, but it is not the Christian religion.

What, then, is faith in the Christian religion, and why does Christianity make faith essential?

WHAT IS FAITH IN THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION?

First of all, from the Christian point of view, faith is not that easy optimism that thinks one can conquer difficulties by ignoring them. It knows that the mountain of difficulties is there, and that it is real. One cannot live the life of faith by a process of self-delusion, for faith, when it is Christian, is always true to fact.

*"Play no tricks upon thy soul, O man;
Let fact be fact, and life the thing it can."*

Jesus Christ did not heal the sick by teaching them that they were not sick, nor cleanse the sinful by teaching them that sin was a mere illusion.

Faith, again, is not that dreary fatalism that saps the mental and moral vitality of the man who yields to its blighting influence. It does not admit that the mountain is there and we have no power to change it or remove it.

Faith, once more, is not that careless self-confidence that goes out to battle in its own strength, and without full preparation for the struggle.

Faith in the Christian religion is none of these things. Christian faith is the one faith in the world that can make no terms with self-delusion, or with fatalism, or with self-deception. It always asserts the supremacy of the spiritual, and insures deliverance of the soul from the tyranny of things.

Faith in the Christian religion is an act or an attitude of self-committal to God as revealed in Jesus Christ. The supreme object of faith in Christianity is a person, and not a message. Of

course, some kind of a message may be necessary for outlining the person who is the object of faith. But the object of heart-reliance to which faith is attached is a personality, and that personality is the Incarnate Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Faith as set forth in the New Testament is an attitude of the will, a habit of mind, an instinct of loyalty which always responds to the summons of truth as it is in Christ, and the call of duty as it comes from Christ. Faith, when it is Christian, is a matter of consecration as well as affirmation. It is a power that holds one, rather than a form that one holds. The New Testament writers make it clear that faith is a way of walking, not a way of talking; a way of working, not a way of loafing. It is a path to be followed, not merely a problem to be solved. Christian faith, in a word, is faith in Christ Himself, not merely in the ideal He cherishes or the principles He taught or the cause He promoted. To believe in Jesus Christ is to do something more than think about Him and to have an opinion concerning Him. It means to bow before Him in reverence; to take Him at His word; to do His will; to begin walking in His way; to make the great surrender; to accept His teaching as true, and prove it by practising it.

The man who so deals with Christ is the man who can be said to have faith in Christ in the New Testament sense of the word. Faith is not the ground of salvation, but the condition. The ground is Christ, and Christ alone. We are saved by our faith, not for our faith. Saving faith is something more than belief of truth. It is trust

and confidence in a person. Its final resting-place is Christ. The New Testament is not the object of faith, but the revelation of the object of faith. "I know," says Paul, "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him" (II Tim. 1:12). Indeed, faith does not become Christian until it is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ. Faith in the Church will make one a church member, faith in a creed will make one a theologian, faith in a sacrament will make one a ritualist, faith in a code of ethics will make one a moralist, but not until faith is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ is one a Christian. There may be faith apart from Christ, but not Christian faith.

WHY IS FAITH ESSENTIAL IN CHRISTIANITY?

Because faith brings sinful men into possession and enjoyment of the benefits of Christ's salvation. Faith is the hand of the heart. It appropriates the gift Christ offers. Faith in its intellectual element is receptive, and believes that God is; in its affectional element faith is assimilation, and believes God is a rewarder; in its voluntary element faith is operative, and actually comes to God in loving trust and obedience.

Faith, then, is a taking of Christ both as Saviour and Lord, and includes both appropriation of Christ and consecration to Christ. Faith is giving as well as taking. "Saving faith," said President Hopkins, "is the consent of the will to the assent of the understanding, and commonly accompanied by emotion."

Faith is the controlling element in life. A man's life depends more on his faith than on anything else. Faith governs conscience; faith governs the affections; faith governs the judgment. From all this it follows that faith governs the conduct. Now, it is not only the Christian whose conduct is governed by faith; every man's is. It is only the Christian whose conduct is governed by faith in Jesus Christ. Every man's conduct is determined by either his conscience, his affection, or his judgment, and therefore every man's conduct is determined by his faith, since faith governs all three. Christianity makes faith the essential demand, rather than knowledge or patience or honesty, because faith controls and directs the entire man. When a foreign power treats with the United States, it does not enter into negotiations with a city mayor, or a governor of a state, or a trades union, or a bankers' association. None of these represents the whole. Each may have considerable power, but none of them can speak or act for the nation. So in Christianity salvation is not promised to knowledge or sobriety or benevolence, or any of these single virtues, but to faith, the controlling and directing power in human life.

Faith is the faculty of knowledge in the spiritual world. It is the power that gives reality to unseen things.

Every sphere of life has its organ of knowledge. The eye is for the visible, the ear for the audible, the hand for the tangible, faith for the spiritual. There is a sphere where sight is the instrument of knowledge; there is another where faith is the in-

strument. We must not exchange our instruments. You cannot see the spiritual. You might just as well expect to hear a picture or a sunset. Jesus Christ insists on faith for the same reason that the mathematician insists on the sense of numbers, the artist on the sense of beauty, the musician on the sense of sound—it is the means of knowledge in the spiritual world.

Faith is the bond of union which unites personalities. All real unions are unions of faith—the parent and the child, the husband the wife, the pupil and the teacher, the soldier and the general, the friend and friend. God and man are no exception to this principle. Between faith and God there is the same correspondence as between the eye and light, the ear and sound. Faith proves God and God demands faith. “Without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6).

Faith is the permanent energy of the soul, the secret principle and power of continuous spiritual activity. Every great life and every great movement for the well-being and welfare of mankind has been rooted in faith. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews never would have been written were it not for the power of faith. Man cannot live without faith, because he lives in a world the complete explanation and use of which are beyond his grasp, apart from faith. A man may exist without faith, just as the animal does, but he cannot live. The secret of all spiritual growth and achievement is faith. No one can do without some kind of faith, and no one has the highest kind of faith until he has the Christian faith, faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith is more, much more, than an act of appropriation. It is a spiritual energy, a dynamic working to practical ends. It is the driving wheel in the engine; yea, it is the propelling power that sets the driving wheel in motion. Tolstoi said: "Faith is among the forces by which men live." It is the force by which Christians live. The power of faith is found not in the mode of believing, but in the object believed. The object of Christian faith is Jesus Christ. Faith becomes mighty to save when it takes hold of a mighty Saviour.

Faith is an index of character. All of the appeals of Christ were made to the faith-faculty in man, all of His promises were to faith as a quality of character, not to persons. It was to "whosoever believeth," "whosoever confesseth," "whosoever followeth," "whosoever loseth," that Christ offered Himself and His Kingdom. History and experience prove that faith in Christ, when it is real, fires life with the energy of a great love, expands and enriches the mind, gives suffering and sorrow a divine setting, and fills the soul with an unconquerable hope. Faith in the religion of Christ, in its final meaning, is a spiritual act, and as such is an index of the nature and character of man. Not to see any beauty and glory in Christ is no indictment of Him, but it is a terrible indictment of the one who admits it. When one admits that he sees no grandeur in Niagara Falls, he casts reflection on his own lack of appreciation and not on this world-renowned phenomenon.

Christ divided men into two classes from the viewpoint of religion, not morals—those who had

faith in Him and those who did not. To see Jesus was not a matter of sight, but of faith. Sight only showed Jesus as a Jewish peasant, and therefore Jesus said once to the Jews: "Ye also have seen me and believed not." God was always made visible and real to faith as it looked upon Jesus Christ. "I know Christ," said Browning, "by the direct glance of the soul's seeing, as the eye sees the light." Faith admits us to a real, not an imaginary, fellowship with God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2). Faith is the assertion of spiritual freedom; it is the first adventure of the soul. Make that adventure towards Christ, and the soul will know it is alive, character will find its highest ideal, and life its supreme satisfaction.

"Faith," says Professor T. H. Green, "is the communication of the divine Spirit by which Christ as the revealed God dwells in our hearts. It is the awakening of the spirit of adoption whereby we cry 'Abba, Father!'"

*"Strong Son of God, immortal love,
Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,
By faith, and faith alone embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove."*
—Tennyson, *In Memoriam*.

THE ESSENTIAL APPEAL: THE CROSS

RELIGIONS differ in many ways, but in no way more vitally than in the nature of their fundamental appeal. History and experience show that there are three possible appeals in religion.

Religion may appeal to the instinct of fear. It was to this instinct that so-called natural religions appealed. Undoubtedly, the appeal to fear has a place in religion. There ought to be a different place for Nero and for Paul. Men cannot play the fool with life and its moral responsibilities, and then imagine that in the end God will be too easy-going to trouble about enforcing the law that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Yet it is true that the instinct of fear is not the deepest instinct in man, nor the highest.

Religion may appeal to the instinct of self-interest. A good deal of our modern religion is based on this appeal. We are told frequently that it pays to be religious, just as it is said that "honesty is the best policy." There is, no doubt, some truth in this claim. It does pay to be religious. Men are coming to see that what is religiously good for a man is economically, mentally, physically and socially good for him. But here again we insist

that the instinct of self-interest is not the deepest or highest instinct in man. A religion founded on calculated self-interest must always remain an ignoble religion. Indeed, it may be said with truth that the man who is religious only because it pays is not really religious in the best sense of the word.

Religion may appeal to the instinct of self-sacrifice. Man is a creature of a twofold ancestry, and brings with him instincts belonging to both the worlds from which he comes. From the brute world he brings the instinct of getting. From the spiritual world he brings the instinct of giving—self-sacrifice. The instinct of giving comes out of the very nature and being of God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ. The deepest truth we know about God, as He is revealed in Christ, is that He is always giving, pouring out His life in unlimited fulness. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

On the authority of the New Testament we unhesitatingly affirm that the fundamental appeal of Christianity is always made to the instinct of self-sacrifice, and that the symbol of that appeal is the Cross. We present the teaching of Christ and His apostles in support of this affirmation.

Christ Himself defined His mission in terms of the Cross: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of God be lifted up” (John 3:14); “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,

and to give his life a ransom for many " (Matt. 20:28); " I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. . . . As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again " (John 10:11, 15, 17).

Christ depended on the Cross to draw men to Himself: " And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me " (John 12:32). He established His memorial in terms of the Cross: " And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body " (Matt. 26:26). Indeed, Christ explained His whole life in terms of the Cross: " Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. . . . Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour " (John 12:24-27).

Over one-fourth of the Gospel story is taken up with the death of Christ, though only two of the Gospels tell the story of His birth, only two tell the story of His temptations, and only two record the sermon on the mount. " From the very first," says Dr. Dale, " the Cross took possession of His own mind; the anticipation of it was constantly recurring to Him. He lived almost always under the shadow of it."

Among the apostles, Paul made the Cross central

in his Gospel. It was the warp and woof of all his teaching and preaching. To the Corinthians he wrote: "I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). Writing to the Galatians, he said: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). In his letter to Titus he says: "He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus 2:13-14). To Paul the truth, "He loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20), was the ground of all his hopes as a Christian man; and the wider truth that He gave Himself for all (II Cor. 5:14-15) was the sum and substance of his message as a Christian minister.

Peter's message, also, was rooted in the Cross. Writing to the Jewish Christians of the dispersion, he says: "Knowing ye were not redeemed with corruptible things or silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood, even the blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18-19). He speaks of Christ as the one "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (I Peter 2:24).

John makes three references to the Cross in his epistles. They are as follows: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7); "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2); "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10).

We heartily agree with Robertson Nichol when he speaks of the New Testament as follows:

“ Its colour all through is the sacrificial colour, for Christ came not to be the mere example, but also to be the uplifter and the redeemer of the world. We mark how as He drew near the close there were outbursts from a profound deep sorrow. It was not that He had any secret remorse ravaging His heart. His grief was not for Himself; it was for us. It was a burden of sympathy. He had come to deal, not with our sorrows only, not with our darkness only; He had come to save us from our sins and all the forces of His nature were strained that He might deliver us and the load of our guilt, and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him all His years. Towards the end His burden-bearing is more manifest. The secrets of His heart are more fully disclosed, but the story is of one piece.”

It is evident from the teaching of the New Testament that the religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of the Cross. There is no New Testament Christianity without Christ, and no New Testament Christ without the Cross. It has been and is to-day the essential appeal of Christianity.

WHY THE CROSS IS THE ESSENTIAL APPEAL OF CHRISTIANITY

The Cross gives us the complete revelation of God's love. It is divine love made visible, the disclosure of the divine heart, the final act in the drama of historic revelation. The Cross reveals to

us a God who took no account of cost, a God whose sacrifice and suffering were measureless because His love was measureless. It shows how far divine love could go. Love to death is love to the uttermost. Divine love could go no further than the Cross, nor could it meet the demands of the situation if it came short of this. When Jesus became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the Cross, love reached its limits. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Because Christ died, we now believe that God loves. For God commendeth His own love toward us, in that while we were yet enemies Christ died for us. The Cross is the expression of divine love for man, not the means of winning that love. "God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The Cross provides the only adequate revelation of divine love, and this is the first reason why it is the essential appeal of Christianity.

The Cross is God's method of justifying Himself in the eyes of a moral universe in His forgiveness of sin. The Cross shows the fixed hostility of the divine nature to sin; it also shows that the world is ruled in righteousness, and that in all God does the ends of righteousness as well as love are met. Again, it shows that there is nothing lawless or capricious in the way which God exercises His pardoning prerogative; it shows, in a word, that His forgiveness is a righteous forgiveness as well as a gracious forgiveness. The primary purpose of the Cross is not to liberate us from the punishment of sin, but from sin. This, evidently, is what Peter

meant in I Peter 1:18-19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;" and what Paul meant in Galatians 1:4: "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." There has always been a strong tendency in men to cling to the negative side of the redemptive process, and to stop at the forgiveness of sins, whereas the teaching of the New Testament always points to, and almost always affirms, the positive side and speaks of the Cross as a stimulus to righteousness and love and devoted service.

The Cross more than anything preserves for us the sense of the holiness of God. This sense is weakening in our day just because the Cross is not emphasized. It has almost become a silent note in our prayers and in our preaching. The idea does not exclude or obscure the idea of holiness; it includes and intensifies it. We need to get this note of holiness back into our worship, our praise, our life, and we will get it back only as we go back to the Cross of Christ. The Cross reminds us that something has been done in us, as well as for us. The Cross, in the last analysis, is a spiritual transaction by which we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but from its power and ultimately from its presence.

*"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,*

*Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."*

The Cross not only redeems us from our sins, it reconciles us to God; it not only offers pardon for sin, but power to overcome sin. "If I want to gaze upon the holiness of God," says Dr. Jowett, "I know of no place like the Cross to see it."

The Cross not only reveals love, it evokes love. It is the very nature of love to impart itself that it may reproduce itself in other hearts. It shrinks back from no sacrifice for the sake of the loved one. Love begets love in every realm of human life. Nothing else will beget love. "We love him," says John, "because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (I John 4:11). "He that loveth God love his brother also" (I John 4:21). By the vision of the Cross the affections of men have been won, their wills have been overmastered, and their lives have been given to God in service and sacrifice. History shows that to have ethical revivals we must first of all have evangelical revivals. We must first have the doctrine of the Cross before we can hope for moral elevation.

In the *Life and Journal of David Brainerd*, edited by Jonathan Edwards, we find this striking testimony: "I never got away from Jesus, and Him crucified, and I found that when my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ, and Him crucified, I had no need to give them instructions about morality. I found that one fol-

lowed as sure and inevitable fruit of the other." The history of the Church shows that in all ages the winning and transforming power of the Gospel have gone with a passionate preaching of redemption through the Cross of Christ. The Cross is the most positive and creative force that works among men. Its force is always life-begetting in individuals and in institutions. The basis of society is not in external laws, nor in an agreement to maintain certain customs, nor in agencies of force. The basis of society is sacrificial love, the symbol of which is the Cross.

The Cross is not only the instrument through which we are saved from the guilt of our sin, it is the power through which we are emancipated from the three most deadly foes of all human progress—self-will, the desire to be outside of the divine law of obedience; greed, the desire to be outside of the divine law of sacrifice; isolation, the desire to be outside of the divine law of fellowship. The redemptive process as embodied in the Cross is not merely individual, it extends to the race of mankind and to the whole constitution of things in which we live. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20). Thus we see that the Cross is the stimulus to every effort for social regeneration, for freedom, for national and international peace, for the bending of all the forces of the world

to their proper object, the bringing in of the Kingdom of God.

The Cross is the divine method of life-giving. Jesus made this fact clear and definite in His response to the inquiry of the Greeks at the feast in Jerusalem when He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:24-25). To Jesus the Cross was the cure of loneliness, the source of fruitfulness, the way to eternal life, and the path to glory. Jesus gave the same answer to the rich young ruler's question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast: . . . and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21). Jesus offered this young man three things: a career, a character, and a cross. This is His standing offer to all men. He knew no way of eternal life or abundant life apart from the Cross.

"All that Christ asked of the world," says Lamennais, "was a cross on which to die." The Cross is not only a guarantee of the Gospel, it is the standard of the Gospel. "Whosoever will be my disciple," said Jesus, "must take up his cross and follow me." We agree heartily with Dr. Robert J. Drummond when he says: "The more it is pondered, the more the power of Christianity is found to lie in the Cross. The Incarnate Christ, the risen and exalted Christ, and all His mysterious presence among us and experience in our midst,

become intelligible when we find Him acting for us and upon us by His death on the Cross, acting in us and through us by awakening in us the very spirit that led Him to the Cross. The Cross symbolizes the nature of the service He did for us; it symbolizes the nature of the service He expects from us."

No, there is no other name given among men whereby they may be saved. There is no solid, objective and satisfying ground of divine forgiveness and divine appeal except the Cross of Christ.

*"O Jesus, hidden God, I cry to Thee;
O Jesus, hidden Light, I turn to Thee;
O Jesus, hidden Love, I run to Thee;
With all the strength I have, I worship Thee;
With all the love I have, I cling to Thee;
With all my soul, I long to be with Thee,
And fear no more to fail, or fall from Thee.*

*"O Jesus, deathless Love, who seekest me,
Thou who didst die for longing love of me,
Thou King in all Thy beauty, come to me;
White-robed, blood-sprinkled, Jesus, come to me,
And go no more, dear Lord, away from me."*

THE ESSENTIAL MESSAGE: THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

NEVER was there an age that asked more earnestly than our own that we Christians proclaim our message, or confess we have no message to proclaim. The men of our day want to hear the man who has a message and who is ready and willing to proclaim it fearlessly and honestly at all times and in all places. We make a mistake when we conclude that the people do not want a definite and positive Christian message. That is just what they do want and are willing to hear. The people are saying to their spiritual leaders and teachers to-day just what they said to Moses: "Go thou and hear all the Lord, our God, shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it."

What men want now is the essential message of Christianity translated into the thought forms of present-day life. They want this message delivered with moral and spiritual authority so that it will grip and command the mind, the conscience, the will, and the heart. The people are hungry for the great spiritual verities of religion. They are tired of doubt, and speculation, and abstract theories. What they are asking for to-day is not

more sermons, but more soul messages; not more services, but more spiritual life; not more ceremonies, but more Christlikeness of character. Men want a message to-day that will catch the ear and change the heart of the sinner, win the mind of the scholar, and satisfy the soul of the saint. There is only one message which will do that—the Gospel of Christ, which we affirm is the essential message of Christianity.

First of all, Christ defined His message in terms of the Gospel: “He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor” (Luke 4:18); “Jesus went preaching the gospel” (Matt. 4:23); “The poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matt. 11:5); “Jesus came, saying: Repent ye and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). He sent His disciples out to preach His message in terms of the Gospel: “And he said unto them, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). “The gospel must first be published among all nations” (Mark 13:10).

The Apostle Paul, too, defined the essential message of Christianity in terms of the Gospel of Christ: “I am an apostle separated unto the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1); “Whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son” (Rom. 1:9); “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16); “I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 15:29); “The light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (II Cor. 4:4); “There be some who would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7); “I declare unto you the gospel which I preached” (I Cor. 15:1); “Woe is

unto me if I preach not the gospel " (I Cor. 9:16); "We suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ " (I Cor. 9:12).

It is evident, then, that the Gospel of Christ is the essential message of Christianity. It holds the central place in the teaching of Christ and in the preaching of the apostles. But why is the Gospel of Christ the essential message of Christianity?

The Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of facts. In an age characterized by "a hunger for facts," the Gospel of Christ ought to be heartily welcomed and accepted, because it is pre-eminently a factual Gospel. It is so presented by all the writers of the New Testament. The four Gospels are simply a record of the facts in the life, teaching, and service of Christ. The book of Acts records the continued work of Christ through the Holy Spirit in terms of facts. The Apostle Paul always defines his Gospel in terms of fact: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached . . . how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures " (I Cor. 15:1-4). The Apostle John, too, defines the Gospel in terms of facts: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled, declare we unto you " (I John 1:3).

The Gospel of Christ is based on truths that grow out of historical facts, and the supreme fact of the Gospel is the fact of Christ. "This is a faithful saying," said Paul, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners " (I Tim.

1:15). The Gospel of Christ exalts the value of facts because they are the bedrock upon which it rests all of its claims and makes all of its promises. Facts always dominate our faith: they are our masters. They serve us and never fail us. No process of logic and no splendour of the imagination can dissolve them. "They cannot be questioned out of existence. They carry their own proofs. They are promise and argument and conclusion all in one." The Gospel of Christ is the essential message of Christianity because it is a Gospel of facts.

The Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of a person. "Personality," says Dr. Henry van Dyke, "is the source of all perception, the starting of all thought, the informing and moulding principle of all language." In the Gospel, Christ is not only the messenger, He is the message. A German author has said: "Christ knew no more sacred task than to point men to Himself." The primary purpose of the Gospel is not to elaborate a system of theology, or ethics, or economics; but to introduce Christ to men's minds and hearts. The data of the Gospel is found in the Person of Christ, not in His ideas, His teaching, His example, merely, but in Him—the Son of Man, the Son of God, the God-man.

There are those to-day who contend that what we need is the Gospel not of the Person of Christ, but of the truth of Christ; that if we accept the principles He taught there need be no special enthusiasm or even thought about His person. It makes no difference, they tell us, who the author was; just accept and follow His teachings. This

is a clear case of the blind leading the blind. For do we not see that in this process Christianity is gradually reduced to a philosophy, and thence into a mere maxim about good and evil? In a word, the message of Christianity is no longer a Gospel of good news, but merely a message of good advice. No, men need more than good advice to dislodge them from their sin and selfishness; they need a deep current of feeling to sweep away from evil towards goodness, from self towards God.

"Ideas," said George Eliot, "are often poor ghosts; our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them; they pass athwart us in their vapour and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh, they breathe upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft responsive hands, they look at us with sad, sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones, they are clothed in a living soul with all of its conflicts, its faith and its love. Then, their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion as flame is drawn to flame." The Gospel of Christ is the essential message of Christianity because it is a Gospel of a living, loving Person, who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

The Gospel of Christ is the Gospel of a Saviour: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21); "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord" (Luke 2:11). The Gospel of Christ offers men a Saviour who is able, and just as willing as He is able, to save them from the guilt and power of their sin. The Gospel

records make Christ stand out clearly and simply as a powerful Saviour of sinful men and women. Dr. Henry van Dyke states: "In His presence the publican and the harlot felt their hearts dissolve with the rapture of the reality of forgiveness. At His word the heavy-laden were loosed from the imponderable burden of past transgression. He suffered with sinners and even while He suffered He delivered them from the sharpest of all pains, the pains of conscious and unpardoned evil. He died for sinners and ever since His Cross has been the sign of rescue for humanity. Whatever may be the nature of the sublime transaction upon Calvary, whatever the name by which men call it—atonement, sacrifice, redemption, propitiation, whatever relations it may have to the eternal law and to the divine righteousness, its relation to the human heart is luminous and beautiful. It takes away sin. Looking unto Christ crucified we receive an assurance of sin forgiven which goes deeper than thought can fathom, and far deeper than words can measure."

*"We may not know, we cannot tell
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.*

*"He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good;
That we might go at least to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood."*

The Gospel of Christ is pre-eminently a Gospel of hope. The New Testament Christians look for-

ward. Their faces are aglow. Their words are vibrant with good cheer. Their lives are transfigured by joy. Life has taken on a new dignity. The man has been clothed with new power. It is an old world, yet a new world, made new because of the new hopes which stir in their hearts, produced by the Gospel of Christ. Christianity's message to the world is one of hope, because it is a message of salvation. It declares that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

It is a message of hope, because it is one of good cheer, not one of condemnation. "For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

It is a Gospel of hope, because it reveals to us the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Christianity roots all life in the fatherly will of God, and, therefore, assures us that we are not victims of heartless law or blind chance. "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not; neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Wherefore, if God so clothe the

grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? ” (Matt. 6:26-30).

The Gospel is one of hope because it takes an optimistic view of the life here and the life hereafter. Its prayer is, “ Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven ” (Matt. 6:9-10). Its good cheer is, “ Son, thy sins be forgiven thee ” (Mark 2:5). Its comfort is, “ Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world ” (Matt. 28:20). Its assurance is, “ I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me shall never die ” (John 11:25-26). Its consolation is, “ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also ” (John 14:1-3). Its victory is, “ In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world ” (John 16:33).

The message of hope which the Gospel of Christ creates is not merely a promise of “ something better by and by,” though it does promise that “ the best is yet to come ”: “ But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him ” (I Cor. 2:9); “ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that,

when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). Jesus does not leave men in their present misery simply enriched by a glorious hope. He puts into their hearts and minds a process which makes the present better and brightens all the future. The hope which the Gospel promises is not only "a new heaven," but also "a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter. 3:13). The hope which the Gospel awakens and continually nourishes is the pledge of the salvation of the world: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). It is the spring of spiritual energy beneath all our Christian institutions and organizations, the vitalizing power of all our missionary enterprise and the transforming influence of all the achievements of the Christian Church. Christian hope is not a mere sentiment nor a passing feeling. It is allied, not with weakness, but with strength, not with misty speculation, but with firm certainty, based on the laws of reality and righteousness.

Christian hope is more than immortality in terms of existence or continued existence. Hope in future existence yields no inspiring joy. In itself the mere fact that I am to live to-morrow, or to continue to live forever does not move me. It awakens no raptures within my soul. Something must be joined with existence before it becomes a joy-giving power. Immortality must be united with character before it can inspire or satisfy the soul. The distinguishing characteristic of Christian hope is that it connects immortality with character, and

so does for the doctrine of immortality what is absolutely necessary to make it a vital power in the soul of man. It connects it with a living Christ: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Christian hope offers men immortality, plus character—in a word, eternal and abundant life. Jesus found a doctrine of immortality current in His day, but expressed only in terms of future existence. He transformed this doctrine into a doctrine of immortality in terms of life, eternal life, everlasting life, abundant life: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28); "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He charged the doctrine of immortality with an ethical content, and made it to consist in a knowledge of God: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

The Gospel of Christ brings to men a life that death and time cannot touch, a life hid with Christ in God, a life that gives men the victory over sin and the grave: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:55-57).

The hope the Gospel of Christ creates leads us from trust in a future event to trust in a living,

present Person. Martha in her sorrow had affirmed her belief in a resurrection at the last day. But Jesus knew that this belief was giving her no comfort, and immediately He led her from her belief in a future event to a belief in a present Person, and that Person Himself. Hope carries us beyond our trust in Christ's promises to trust in Himself. We believe in His promises because we believe in Him. With Christ it is, "I am," not "I give;" "He that believeth in me"—not merely in "my gifts or my promises." Indeed, it may be said that we cannot have His gifts without having the Giver. Faith in His promises involves faith in the Promiser. Hence He asks Martha: "Believest thou this?" And her answer practically amounts to saying: "I do more than believe this—I believe Thee" (John 11:26-27).

Hope that is born of merely science and natural evidence awakens no joyful enthusiasm in the masses of mankind. It stands with a question upon its lips, tremulous at times, peering into the future with a troubled gaze, hoping rather than believing, and passing into the future with the peace of resignation rather than the joy of assurance. Christian hope—that is, hope that is born of trust in the Person of Christ and belief in the promise of Christ—voices itself in words of assurance such as these: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Cor. 5:1); in words of triumph: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities,

ties, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord " (Rom. 8:38-39); in words of victory: " But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ " (I Cor. 15:57); in words of comfort: " Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also " (John 14:1-3); in words of peace: " Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid " (John 14:27).

We have grievous need to get back to our sources. Our life is languishing and only the Gospel of Christ can give us the hope which will save us. Let us glory in our Gospel which has come down through the centuries, the hope of the despairing, the joy of the sorrowing, the comfort of the suffering, and the pardon and power of the sinning.

*" Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find:
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy Name;
I am all unrighteousness;*

*False and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.*

*“Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the Fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity.”*

THE ESSENTIAL ACT: REGENERATION

CHRISTIANITY begins in an act, and continues in a process. The importance of this act is clearly set forth by the fact that Christ prefaced His statement about it with the solemn words, "Verily, verily." He did this three times in His conversation with the great Jewish teacher, Nicodemus. He did so the first time when He informed this distinguished Hebrew scholar that real Christianity does not consist in the mental reception of certain doctrines: "Jesus answered and said unto him: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). He did so the second time when He declared that Christianity does not consist in an outward amendment of life, but in an inward and spiritual change in the formative depths of our being. The Jewish rabbi expressed amazement at the existence of a religion so transcendental and so miraculous. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6).

Then our Lord used His characteristic phrase the third time when He asserted in reply that the essential fact of Christianity, though so utterly supernatural, was a matter of actual personal experience—regeneration. Regeneration, in the New Testament, is the work of the Holy Spirit in a man by which a new life of holy love, like the love of God, is initiated. Identifying Himself with all His disciples, He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:11-12).

It thus being evident, from the teaching of Christ, that regeneration is the essential act of Christianity, we ask, Why is it the essential act of Christianity?

Regeneration is the requisite for spiritual life. Birth is always the condition of life. There is no physical life without physical birth. There is no mental life without mental birth. A person who has not had mental birth is an idiot. There is no moral life without moral birth. A man who has not had moral birth is unmoral. There is no spiritual life without spiritual birth: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." That like produces like, is one of the fundamental laws of all life. "Denial of the necessity of regeneration," says William DeWitt Hyde, "is virtual denial of the Spirit of God in the life of humanity." For the complete deliverance from the power as well as from the love of sin, we must look to a principle deeper than

generation, education, legislation, or reformation—nothing less than a spiritual regeneration will bring to us the deliverance we need. “Without regeneration a man is only playing the Christian,” says Dr. David Gregg. “He is no better spiritually than a galvanized corpse. Under the power of electricity the corpse may open and shut its eyes, move its hands and feet, but there is no life in it. Without regeneration a man can only have a name to live, while he is dead.”

Regeneration implies a new birth from which issues a new life, the calling into exercise of new powers, the introduction of a new realm of thought and action. The Christian life is a divine attainment, a supernatural experience, and not a mere natural development, the result of heredity, of education, effort and favourable environment. There is a divine act at its root, giving it being. The temptation is strong in these days, when development is supposed to be the key to all progress, to forget this old and vital truth. Let us not yield to this movement. Let us remember that development may increase the size, but it does not change the nature of man. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13).

Regeneration is requisite for membership in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God had been the hope and inspiration of Israel for centuries.

Christ knew this, and hence we would expect Him to state to Nicodemus the foundation fact and requisite for membership in this Kingdom. He does so in unmistakable language. And what is it? The new birth-regeneration. "Except a man be born again," He says, "he cannot enter the kingdom," even more than this, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." The nature of the Kingdom and the condition of man make regeneration an absolute necessity. The Kingdom of God is spiritual, and therefore, in order to become a citizen of it, a spiritual nature is requisite.

The character of the Kingdom of God is such, its distinctive blessings are such, that unregenerated nature cannot enter it, is incapacitated for sharing them, yes, even incapacitated for apprehending them. For this a fundamental change is required—not growth, but a new beginning; in reality, a new birth. The necessity for this new birth is not only asserted in the Gospel, it is argued and demonstrated to Nicodemus by Christ Himself. That which is born of the flesh, that which results from the purely creaturely nature, however cultivated, and refined, and improved, remains the same; it cannot transcend the limits to which it belongs. The Kingdom of God is spiritual, and therefore in order to participate in it a spiritual nature is requisite. In other words, to the merely natural life which belongs to us as human beings, there must be added the new life of the Spirit. The necessity of the spiritual change, termed in John's Gospel "the new birth," "born from above," or regeneration, is, according to the teaching of

Christ, absolute and universal. This statement is one of primary significance in the New Testament, one which we Christians are constantly tempted to have out of view, or to reduce to insignificance in periods of material prosperity and intellectual pride. Regeneration is not a necessity only for heathen people and those who are immoral. Nicodemus, to whom the outstanding discourse in the New Testament on regeneration was given, was a moral and a well-living, respectable Jew.

This radical change, in all cases, is requisite for membership in Christ's Kingdom. There are no exceptions to the law. "Regeneration," says Dr. Theodore T. Munger, "is a psychological necessity. We must be born again, not merely because we are wicked, not because of a lapse, but because we are flesh and need to be carried forward and lifted up into the realm of the Spirit. A constructive, as well as a reconstructive process is necessary in our spiritual life." This is what the apostle meant when, writing to the Romans, he said: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:5-6).

Regeneration is necessary to the permanence and progress of the Kingdom of God. "The term 'regeneration,'" says Dr. David Gregg, "is a synonym of our political term 'naturalization.'" We insist, and rightly so, that for the peace and progress and stability of our government, men

coming to our country from another shall be naturalized before they can enjoy all the rights of citizenship. This is not an arbitrary law; it is logical and natural; it rests on sound philosophy, sane psychology, and good religion. It is not only good nationalism, it is equally good internationalism. The naturalized citizen of any country loses his old national nature and receives the new nature of his adopted country, and with this new nature he thinks new thoughts, owns new allegiance, seeks new aims, and is filled with a new spirit. If this be not true, he has not been "born again," and his citizenship in the new country is not genuine. If this is not true, in spirit he is still an alien and unworthy of his naturalization papers and privileges. The Kingdom of God rests on regenerated citizens, citizens who incarnate the Spirit, the ideals and the life of the King of the Kingdom. There is no substitute for regeneration in the Kingdom of God. Its progress and its permanence depend upon it.

Regeneration makes heaven enjoyable. An unregenerated man could find no happiness and joy in heaven. He would have no sympathy with its song and its service. He would be lonely and utterly incapable of entering into the fellowship of "the saints in glory." The fitness of things requires regeneration. A sinful nature would not harmonize with the holiness of heaven. "Who," says the Psalmist, "shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart." In a word, he who has

the nature and inclination to enjoy fellowship with God.

Dr. Henry van Dyke tells in one of his stories of a lad who asked his father who owns the mountains. "He who appreciates them," answered the father. It is only through regeneration that men are able to appreciate and enjoy the Kingdom of God. "There is within every one of us an ingrained unfitness to receive the things of the Spirit," says Rev. T. B. Seibly, "which nothing but a new birth by the power of God can take away. When the rudiments of sense exist it may be helped or educated, but the sense itself can only be imparted by a new birth. The optician may aid the natural power of the eye with his lenses, or hide a defect by what is artificial, but no skill can create the specialized sense which distinguishes colour, detects scent, or judges of musical pitch. These incomprehensible discriminations come with birth, and if wanting are irretrievably so." A blind man cannot know the charm of a sunset, although he may have mastered the secrets of the spectrum; nor can a deaf man know the delight of a perfectly rendered oratorio, although he may be a mathematician and have all recent researches at his finger-ends. Just so, the spiritual senses by which the things of the Kingdom of God, here and hereafter, are discerned issue from a spiritual birth. It is impossible for an intellectual faculty to act as a substitute for a strictly spiritual faculty. Natural senses cannot act in place of spiritual.

This is what Paul meant when he said: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit

of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). All that Paul is saying here is that to have the spiritual sensation you must have the spiritual sense, just as to have musical sensation, you must have the musical sense; the artist sensation, you must have the artistic sense. The Kingdom of Heaven has no misfits, and the man who should find an entrance there without the regenerated heart would be a round peg in a square hole. That is why Paul insists: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new." We must have new life, new currents of sympathy, new aptitudes quickened, new fellowships cemented, in order to appreciate and enjoy the heavenly life.

Some years ago a Sunday-school picnic and a saloon-keepers' picnic were sailing from the same dock in the city of Detroit. By mistake one of the saloon-keepers got on the Sunday-school boat, but did not discover his mistake until the boat had started. He went to the captain and begged him to return to the dock, offering to pay him a large sum of money if he would do so. The captain refused, and then said to the distressed man: "These Sunday-school people are good people, they will treat you kindly and give you a good time." "Yes," said the saloon-keeper, "I know they are good people, captain: I know they will treat me kindly, and give me a good time, but *they are not my kind.*"

It is idle for some men to talk about "going to

heaven ” and to express the desire that they “ may reach heaven at last.” What they should desire and what they should seek is regeneration—the preparation, and the only preparation, which will make heaven enjoyable. “ Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God ” (Rom. 8:12-14).

*“ Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.*

*“ Hast Thou not bid us love Thee, God and King?
All, all Thine own, soul, heart, and strength
and mind;
I see Thy Cross—there teach my heart to cling:
Oh, let me seek Thee, and oh, let me find.”*

THE ESSENTIAL EVIDENCE: CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

AS fact, Christianity is history; as truth, it is theology; as conduct, it is ethics; and as life, it is experience. No argument is needed to prove that life is the dominant term in which Christianity is presented in the New Testament. "In him was life," says John, "and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Christ constantly defined His religion in terms of life: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6); "I am the bread of life" (John 6:48); "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25); "I am come that ye might have life" (John 10:10). Because Christianity, in the last analysis, is life, we affirm that Christian experience is the essential evidence of Christianity. In support of this affirmation we once again direct attention to the teaching of the Gospels and of the apostles.

Christ's invitation to the inquiring disciples was in terms of experience: "Come and see" (John 1:39). His response to the doubting Thomas was to an experience: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27). He appealed to experience

as proof of His Messiahship: "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see" (Matt. 11:4). He declared that experience is the condition of spiritual knowledge: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17). He defined happiness in terms of experience: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). He taught that experience was the requisite for entering the Kingdom of Heaven: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

The man who was born blind based his faith in Christ on experience: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). The Samaritans founded their faith in Christ on experience: "And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:41-42).

In the book of the Acts the experience of the healed man was an unanswerable argument for the value of experience: "And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it" (Acts 4:14).

Paul offered, as proof of his conversion, an experience: "Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20); "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21); "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is

a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new " (II Cor. 5:17); " I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me " (Phil. 4:13).

John, too, based his testimony on experience: " That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life . . . declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ " (I John 1:2-3). " He that believeth on the Son of God," says John, " hath the witness (experience) in himself " (I John 5:10).

It is evident, therefore, that from of old Christian experience is the essential evidence of Christianity. Indeed, we are entirely within the bounds of truth when we assert that the first Christians had no other evidence to which they could appeal. There was no Church history to which they could appeal. The records which constitute the New Testament had not been written. All they had upon which to base their faith and their testimony was their own personal experience of the power of Christ in their lives and homes. Though the Christianity of the New Testament is capable of a doctrinal exposition, though it is eminently fertile in moral and cultural results, yet its substance is neither a dogmatic system, nor an ethical code, but a Person and a Life, from which comes a great experience to all who believe in the Person and accept the Life.

Among the first disciples of Christ Christianity was first an experience and afterwards a creed. It was not a set of opinions on more or less difficult questions on which they also were asked their opinions. Christianity was God's remedy for man's deepest, direst and surest need. When men felt this need, they went to Christ and found in Him a remedy that registered itself in a saving and transforming experience, which experience has always been and is to-day the essential evidence of Christianity. Surely no man has ever accepted Christianity merely, or mainly, on documentary or literary evidence, and no man who has experienced the saving and transforming power of Christianity could ever reject it on such grounds.

The man whose Christianity is not a theory or a speculation, or a creed, or a ceremony, but a realized life, is not at the mercy of scientific or historical criticism. He knows from a personal experience that "he has passed from death unto life." The dominant fact in New Testament Christianity is the reality of the transforming experience of contact with Christ. The New Testament Christians found in this experience all that made life significant, triumphant and joyous. Pardon for the past, power for the present, and hope for the future, all became a present consciousness to them through Christian experience. The essential evidence of New Testament Christianity is unquestionably Christian experience.

That Christian experience should indeed be the essential evidence of Christianity we believe for the following reasons:

Christian experience is the ground of certainty. The keynote of New Testament Christianity is certainty, assurance, confidence. That note sounds out from every page. "Be of good cheer," said Jesus to His sad and troubled disciples, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33); "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). Paul strikes this same note of certainty. "We know," he says, "that all things work together for good" (Rom. 8:28); "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Cor. 5:1); "I know whom I have believed" (II Tim. 1:12). "There is no hesitation or reservation or qualification," says Dr. Calkins, "about Paul's conviction and assurance. He is simply and magnificently sure. He talks about being 'grounded' in the faith (Col. 1:23); of being built upon a foundation (I Cor. 3:11); of having a hope both sure and steadfast (Heb. 6:19); of how the 'foundation of God standeth sure' (II Tim. 2:19)."

John, too, sounds forth this note of certainty. "We do know him," he says (I John 2:3); "Hereby know we that we are in him" (I John 2:5); "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning" (I John 2:14); "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins" (I John 3:5); "We know that he hears us" (I John 5:15); "And we know that we are of God" (I John 5:19).

"The New Testament writers without an exception are sure of their facts and experiences," says

Dr. Calkins. "Their whole message and outlook are grounded on certainty. Here is no hint of doubt or question. Religious teaching was never more authoritative in all history than it was from the lips of the New Testament teachers and preachers." Their creed certainly was founded on one thing, and one thing only—their Christian experience, their experience of God in and through Jesus Christ. Whenever they were questioned or threatened they answered in terms of experience. "We cannot," they said when standing before the threatening Sanhedrin, "but speak the things we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Christian experience was not only the foundation of their faith, it was the courage of their hearts, the secret of their unflinching loyalty to Christ; it was the ground of their absolute certainty and their unfaltering confidence. It is both self-verifying and self-sustaining, the creator of a genuine sense of reality.

Christian experience is the source of transforming power in human life. Paul always explained the transformation of his life in terms of his experience in and with Christ. "Whereupon, O King Agrippa," he said, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). As evidence of his experience, Paul affirmed: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). So deep and thorough was this experience that his life was completely changed. "For me to live," he says, "is Christ, and to die is gain." Up to the time of this experience he had said: "For me to live is Saul, Saul's pleasure and

Saul's profit." All was changed through his contact with Christ. His character was remade, his life was transformed, and his purpose recut. His was a new creation. Christian experience is not only self-convincing, it is Christ-conforming, it is the power by which we are "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29).

Through Christian experience Christ becomes more than a historical figure and a powerful moral influence. He is the law and life of the soul. The triumph of the Christ within (the Christ of experience) over the impulses and passions of the lower self is no vision, but a fact to which the language and the experience of countless souls in the centuries of Christian history bear abundant witness. The form of Christian experience may vary, yet the essence of it is the same—the victory of the Christ-life over the self-life, the Spirit over the flesh. "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth within me," is the language of Christian experience. "For me to live is Christ," is the product of the transforming power of Christian experience. Christian experience makes Christ not only a fact in human lives but a power, also: "But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (II Cor. 4:16).

Christianity has been verifying its claims and promises in the lives of men for nearly twenty centuries. Its record is written not only in books, but in transformed lives. It has broken the chains of evil habits, imparted joy to discouraged and despairing souls, changed motives, and completely

reversed the whole trend and purpose of countless lives. Christian experience has proved its power and reality by making weak men strong, bad men good, profane men pure, proud men humble, and violent men gentle.

Christian experience always interprets Christianity in a consciousness of unmeasured obligation in which self-interest is dethroned, self-seeking is abandoned, self-gratification is ended, and self-glory is forgotten. "All who have ever enjoyed a real Christian experience," says Dr. Frederick C. Spurr, "testify to a life harmonized with God in Christ; to a new outlook upon God, man, life and destiny; to a new spiritual power within, resulting in freedom and progress; to a mind at rest, yet ever expanding; to a new ethical dynamic, love; and a new type of character, Christlikeness."

Christian experience is the organ of knowledge in the spiritual world. Roger Bacon said: "Experience alone gives accurate knowledge." Christianity from the very beginning taught this doctrine. It learned it from Christ Himself. It was His method in dealing with man. In Christianity you must do in order to know. Knowledge can come only through obedience. "If any man," He said, "will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

It is by experience that we know that light was made for the eye, and music for the ear, and love for the heart, and the soul for God. It is still true that "spiritual things are spiritually discerned," just as musical things are musically discerned, his-

torical things are historically discerned, scientific things are scientifically discerned, and mathematical things are mathematically discerned. To have spiritual sensations, one must have the spiritual sense. Experience is the channel of knowledge in the spiritual world. It is the privilege of every Christian to know God through a personal experience; indeed, there is no other way of knowing God. One may know about Him through history and tradition, through science and philosophy, but apart from personal experience one can never know Him. Experience is the avenue of knowledge into the unseen world, it is the key of revelation and the vision of heaven. When the scientist comes, as he constantly does, on something beyond his tasks, as, for instance, life, he ought to leave it to religion. When the saint comes to something material, as, for instance, creation, he ought to leave it to science. Religion has no apparatus for science, so science has no method of discovering God. Science answers the *how* of the universe: religion answers the *why* of the universe. Science proves its claims through logic and law; religion proves its claims through love and life. Religion, from the Christian point of view, translates love and life into an experience. Theology is a science created by reason; religion is an experience created and guided by faith. Every day, somehow, help somebody; more and more learn the Spirit of Christ, and thus will you come unconsciously and inevitably into the possession of the essential evidence of Christianity.

Christian experience is the root of fruitful

Christian lives and Christian service. The New Testament insists that all real inspiration in Christianity comes from a personal experience of the saving and transforming power of Christ.

Possessing the secret of the abundant life made Paul a debtor to the Greek, and to the Barbarian, both to the wise and the unwise, until he shared it with them: "I am debtor to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." Experience of the life of Christ impelled David Livingstone to write: "My desire is to see the Kingdom of my Saviour in the hearts of all those now in the state I myself was." It led Phillips Brooks to say: "It is the sincere and deep conviction of my soul when I declare that if the Christian faith does not culminate and complete itself in the effort to make Christ known to all the world, that faith appears to me to be a thoroughly unreal and insignificant thing, destitute of power for the single life, and incapable of being convincingly proved to be true." Dwight L. Moody's fruitful life was the direct result of his personal experience of the love of Christ. Over and over again he declared that Christ was the source of all his life and service. Northfield never would have been known as a religious centre had it not been for Mr. Moody's deep and real experience of Christ's saving power. The greatest men and the greatest movements of the Christian centuries are direct products of Christian experience. Christian experience is the secret of the productive energy of Christianity in the hearts

of men and the life of society. It has always manifested itself in the "clean heart" and the "right spirit," the two essentials of a Christian society.

Christian experience is an unanswerable argument for Christianity. For, after all, Christianity rests primarily not on argument, but on concrete experience. One twice-born man is a better defence of the Christian faith than many volumes on the psychology of conversion. Christian experience is the authoritative guarantor of the claims and truths of Christianity to-day. "Doubt of any sort," says Carlyle, "cannot be removed except by action." Sensible men realize that religion, like music, rests on experience. It is the faith of experience that wins and holds men in our generation. Men do not wish to have merely the word of the artists for the glory and beauty of nature. They wish to feel the awakening of life of spring, and to see the splendours of the growing year with their own senses. They will not take the mere word of Burns for the sweetness of love, or the glory of youth, or the joy of freedom; they insist on knowing life through their own experience. Christianity welcomes this demand and completely satisfies it by a personal experience of Christ's saving love and power. The scientific mind is making a noble contribution to religion—a keen and quickened sense of truth and a passion for verification. "Make sure, be sure you know, look to it for yourself, verify," says the scientist.

This was and is the method of Jesus Christ Himself. He practised it in all of His dealings with

men, and taught His disciples to apply it. He used it because it always gives a deep and firm sense of reality. "Jesus," says Arnold, "never touches theory but bases Himself invariably on experience." "Come and see," was His standing invitation to all men. The Christian message is, "Come unto Me," and the function of the Christian Church is to bring men to Christ and leave them with Him to learn for themselves. No other evidence can be substituted for the inward, experimental evidence of Christianity, it is final and unanswerable. "Try it," says Coleridge. "Do not talk to me of the evidences of Christianity, try it." That is all Christianity asks of men, and when tried on its own terms the truths of Christianity rise to greet us in all of their life, light and love.

THE ESSENTIAL EXPRESSION: SERVICE

NO one who knows and accepts the teachings of the New Testament is likely to doubt or deny that service is the essential expression Christianity. Christianity by its very nature demands an outlet as well as an inlet. Its elemental law is, Use or lose. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25). Service in the Christianity of Christ is inevitable, not optional; a non-service Christianity is a misnomer, a contradiction of the spirit and teaching of the New Testament. Again we turn to Jesus and the apostles, in support of the affirmation that service is the essential expression of Christianity.

As a boy of twelve Christ dedicated His life to service. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He asked, in Luke 2:49. In fact, the keynote of His first sermon was service.

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, be-

cause he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears " (Luke 4:16-21).

Christ defined His religion in terms of service:

" And Jesus answering said, a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place came and looked on him and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan as he journeyed came where he was: and when he saw him he had compassion on him and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine and set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed he took out two pence and gave them to the host and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. Which, now, of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise " (Luke 10:30-37).

He made service the proof of His Messiahship:

“And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him they said, John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me ” (Luke 7:19-23).

Service was the joy and refreshment of the heart of Christ and the strength of His soul: “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work ” (John 4:34). He made service the proof of love: “He said unto him, the third time, Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep ” (John 21:17); He made it the badge of discipleship in the Kingdom of God: “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant ” (Matt. 20:27); and the standard of greatness in His religion: “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant ” (Matt. 23:11).

The final principle of judgment in Christianity is service:

“ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me ” (Matt. 25:34-40).

Moreover, Christ gave service the central place in His own life as well as in His teaching:

“ Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded ” (John 13:3-5). “ As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. . . . Jesus said unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples

durst ask him, What art thou? knowing that it was the Lord " (John 21:9, 12).

Turning to Paul, we find him in his letter to the Romans saying: " But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter " (Rom. 7:6). To the Galatians: " For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another " (Gal. 5:13). To the Colossians: " And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ " (Col. 3:23-24). To the Corinthians: " For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake " (II Cor. 4:5).

The teachings of James in his epistle are no less direct: " Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves " (James 1:22). " What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy

works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works " (James 2:14-18).

To John in the Revelation, heaven in Christianity is a place of service: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night " (Rev. 7:15). "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him " (Rev. 22:3). It is evident from this review of the teachings of the New Testament that Christianity is a religion of service as well as a religion of doctrine and ethics; in a word, service is the essential expression of Christianity. What, then, does service mean in Christianity, and why is it essential?

Service, according to the teachings of the New Testament, has a very definite meaning. Not all service is Christian service, though all service may be Christian service if those who serve desire to make it so: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity " (Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus devotes a large part of the Sermon on the Mount to showing that in the Kingdom of God the essence of service is found in the spirit, the motive, and the purpose of it. See Matt. 5:20-48, 6:1-18. Paul, too, taught this same doctrine in I Corinthians 13.

A careful study of the Christianity of the New Testament makes it clear that Christian service is not defined in terms of what you do, or when you do it, but in terms of the spirit in which you do it. Christian service always puts the emphasis on the motive and not on the act. The New Testament defines Christian service as service: "In the name of Christ, for the glory of Christ, for Christ's sake, and for the Gospel's sake." Paul sums up the meaning of Christian service and how it differs from all other service in the words: "Your servants for Jesus sake" (II Cor. 4:5).

Christian service as thus defined is always sacrificial and unselfish. Its aim is to meet a need; its object is usefulness; its reward is more service. The Christian receives in order that he may give, he asks for strength in order that he may serve Him. Here is where Christian service differs from non-Christian service.

We heartily agree with a recent writer who says: "We need Christlike men of large ideals and big hearts, trained and disciplined, with undaunted courage and fortitude, who will respond to the call of the Divine Voice, not for the sake of the position or the pay it brings, but for the love of Christ and His people, recognizing that Christian ministry provides greater scope for the service of humanity than any other ministry known to mankind." This is exactly what Christianity means by service.

Service is essential in Christianity because it is the best evidence of discipleship: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8); "Wherefore by

their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). Each time Peter affirmed his love for Christ in that unforgettable morning interview by the lake-side, Jesus said, "Prove it by thy service . . . feed my sheep . . . feed my lambs" (John 21:15-17). A Christian or a Christianity that is not actively and actually serving in the kingdom is like "salt that has lost its savour"—useless and worthless to both God and man.

Service is the best credential for Christianity. In response to the disciples of John who asked Jesus, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Luke 7:19-23). Now, as then, the best credential for Christianity is the thing we see and hear. Men can meet your arguments in terms of words, but not in terms of deeds; see John 9. For a present-day Christianity we must have a present-day credential. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," said Christ, "because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

Is He doing it to-day? This is the question the followers of Christ must face and answer. If He

is, those who believe in Him have no need to fear or look for other evidence to commend Christianity to others; if he is not, no other evidence will suffice. Men are sensitive to-day to a Christianity of service, a Christianity that not only saves souls, but opens homes for the aged, and for little children, builds hospitals for the sick and the wounded, neighbourhood centres for the lonely and the stranger, that maintains institutions of worship, of learning, of comradeship and hope in all the dark and hard places of the earth. The best apologetic for Christianity to-day is applied Christianity. Applied Christianity always means a Christianity in terms of sympathy and service as well as a Christianity in terms of salvation for the individual, and for society. A saved soul, in a saved body, living in a saved community is not only the best credential for Christianity, it is the only credential that satisfies the demands of New Testament Christianity and meets the need of the world. Christian service is the best proof that Christ is a living Christ.

Service is the best interpreter of Christianity and the most effective way to bring people together in a great Christian fellowship. No doctrinal interpretation or intellectual defense of Christianity is so convincing as actual works of love and service. Unselfish and sacrificial service is the strongest appeal and the most effective translation of the divine realities of the religion of Jesus Christ. Men and women and little children grasp the inner meaning of Christianity more readily in terms of deeds than in terms of words, in terms of service

than in terms of sermons. The only Christianity that can do anything for me is a Christianity that makes me want to do something for you. "The missionary enterprise is not the Church's afterthought," says Dr. Henry van Dyke, "it is Christ's forethought. It is not secondary and optional; it is primary and vital. Christ has put it into the very heart of His Gospel. We cannot really see Him or know Him and love Him unless we know and love His ideal for us, and that ideal is embodied in the law of service."

Service is the best response to the challenge of Christianity. The New Testament makes it clear that Christ summoned men to follow Him in His life of service as well as in His life of communion with God. Here is His summons: "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15). Service is the only way to Christlikeness. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). Christ, by practice and by precept, taught His disciples that they must be like Him if they would belong to Him, that if they would share His spirit, they must share His service. It is perfectly evident that in the Christianity of Christ there is no substitute for service. Let us remember, and never forget, that the Christ of Christianity is not only a saving and a teaching Christ, He is likewise a serving Christ.

The great gulf between Christ and His contem-

poraries is realized when we find Him insisting that religiousness apart from righteousness and usefulness is not merely valueless, but vicious. To the men who are avowedly outside of the Church, the test of practical service is the only one that greatly appeals. Speak to them of the theological discussions of our day; the answer of their minds, if not of their lips, is: "Show us your blind that have received sight, your depraved that have been made clean, your poor that have been made glad; show us the greater works that Christ promised should be done by those who loved Him." Such a challenge, by whatever lips uttered, is a true challenge of Christ. When Christianity is true to the teaching of the New Testament, it will follow in the footsteps of "the Son of Man, who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister." The hope of the world is still in Christ's keeping, and the cause of the poor is still in His heart. The God who answers man's longings and needs by a saving and a serving Christ, is the God needed in our day. That God is found in Jesus Christ, and only in Jesus Christ.

*"O Master, let me walk with Thee,
In lowly paths of service free;
Tell me Thy secrets; let me bear
The strain of toil, the fret of care.
Teach me Thy patience, still with Thee
In closer, dearer company,
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong,
In trust that triumphs over wrong."*

THE ESSENTIAL SPIRIT: THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

CHRISTIANITY, according to the New Testament, is a spirit. It has its doctrine, but it is a spirit; it has its organization, but it is a spirit; it has its sacraments, but it is a spirit; it has its worship, but it is a spirit; it has its morals, but it is a spirit; it has its service, but it is a spirit.

According to the Gospel, Christ was prepared for His life and ministry by the Spirit: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17). He explained His mission in terms of the Spirit: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). He judged men according to their spirit: "Then shall the righteous answer him,

saying, Lord when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee! or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:37-40).

Paul defined Christianity in terms of the Spirit: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29); "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-25); "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8).

John, also, defined Christianity in terms of the Spirit: "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (I John 3:24).

The New Testament not only makes it clear that Christianity, in the last analysis, is a spirit, but it insists that the spirit of Christ is the essential spirit of Christianity. "Without me," He said to His disciples, "ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

"Now, if any man," said Paul, "have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). It is evident from such passages as these, and many others in the New Testament, that there is no substitute for the Spirit of Christ in Christianity. How does it come that the Spirit of Christ is the essential spirit of Christianity?

The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of unfaltering loyalty to the will of God. "Thy will be done," was the animating and dominating motive of His entire life. As a boy of twelve He said: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). In the midst of His ministry He declared: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). He taught His disciples to pray: "Thy will be done" (Matt. 6:10). His chief concern in the hour of His agony in the garden and on the Cross was His Father's will: "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). Never once did He question or seek to evade or ignore the will of God. He welcomed it always, and rejoiced in the privilege of having it done in Him and through Him. The Spirit of Christ makes clear to all men that the doing of God's will is the secret of the most useful and blessed life.

Furthermore, loyalty to the love of God is the basis of the highest ideal of character and the strongest motive for noble conduct. It is the germ of New Testament Christianity, and when rightly apprehended it furnishes a regulative principle for the whole of life. The man whose life is based on

loyalty to the will of God will be kind and considerate in his home, upright and honest in his work, just and generous in his relations, public-spirited in civic and political responsibilities, socially courteous and sincere, sympathetic with the suffering, generous with the poor, helpful to the weak.

On the other hand, he will resist oppression, expose hypocrisy, denounce injustice, rebuke fraud, fight for timely and rational reform. He will do these things whether they are profitable or costly, popular or unpopular, whether they bring thanks or curses, praise or blame, whether men strew his path with palms and hail him with hosannas, or crown him with thorns and nail him to a cross. His supreme reward and satisfaction is found in the doing of the will of His Father. Because the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of unfaltering loyalty to the will of God, it is the essential spirit of Christianity.

The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of unceasing service for the Kingdom of God. Christ not only prayed for the kingdom and taught His disciples to pray for it, He was untiring in His service for it and within it. The Kingdom of God is the watchword of His life; the keynote of His teaching, and the goal of His ministry. The main topic of His parables was the Kingdom of God. He preached "the Gospel of the Kingdom" (Mark 1:14). This, moreover, was the one message which His disciples were to carry to the ends of the earth: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). After

His passion, during the interval between His resurrection and ascension, His theme was still the same, for we are told "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

Evidently, from first to last, the burden of Christ's teaching was the Kingdom of God. "Though it may be somewhat difficult," says Dr. A. J. Haynes, "to determine how the Jews interpreted the phrase, Kingdom of God, the meaning Jesus attached to it is fairly clear. Sometimes it meant to Him a power in the soul, sometimes a heaven at work in the world, sometimes a society redeemed and purified; but always to Him it was the reign of God—over all, and in all, and through all."

"Every prophet of the first order," affirms Dr. John Watson, "has his own message, and it crystallizes into a favourite idea. With Moses the ruling idea was law; with Confucius, it was morality; with Buddha, it was renunciation; with Mohammed, it was God; with Socrates, it was the soul; with Jesus Christ, it was the Kingdom of God. He exhorts men to make any sacrifice that they may enter the Kingdom of God. He encourages some one because he is not far from the Kingdom of God. He comforts the poor because theirs is the Kingdom of God." In the Gospels, Jesus is ever preaching the Kingdom of God and explaining it in parables and pictures of exquisite simplicity and beauty. In the mind of Christ the

Kingdom meant cheerful submission to the reign of God in the human heart, and all human relationships. It meant, also, the reign of character, and the supremacy of the spiritual in the life that now is, as well as in the life that is to come. The Kingdom of God is central in Christianity because it is a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is not meat and drink, it is something infinitely more vital; it is not external, mechanical and spectacular, it is inward, spiritual and eternal. The coming of the Kingdom means the righting of cruel wrongs in the world, wrongs that daily cry to God for correction. When His Kingdom comes, tyranny, oppression, injustice will cease; strife and distrust will be eliminated; the noise and terror of war will be heard no more; hate and enmity shall die, and justice, peace, and joy will reign in all hearts, in all homes, and in all lands.

The coming of the Kingdom, in the mind of Christ, meant hearts cleansed of sin, homes filled with joy, village, town, city, state, the world itself, transformed by the principle of righteousness; business no longer conducted under the law of self-seeking, but under the law of love: "That ye love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34); relations of capital and labour no longer those of war, but of peace; class hatred, race hatred, and all separation along other lines will pass away, and the spirit of peace and not war will rest upon all nations. Because the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of unceasing service for the Kingdom of God, it is the essential spirit of Christianity.

*“Break, triumphant, day of God,
Break, at last, our hearts to cheer;
Throbbing souls and holy songs,
Wait to have thy dawning here.*

*“Empires, temples, sceptres, thrones,
May they all for God be won,
And in every human heart,
Father, let Thy Kingdom come.”*

The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of unlimited sacrifice for the children of God. The keynote of Christ's life was sacrifice. “I am not come,” He said, “to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give my life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). Christ's sacrificial love not only seeks and finds us and saves us from our sins and from ourselves, it imparts to us the quickening sense of pardon, and fills us with the calm and strength of everlasting life. Christ explained His mission to the world in terms of self-sacrifice for men: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). The whole life of Christ was an expression of self-sacrifice for the children of God. “For their sakes,” He said, “I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19).

Christ's sacrifice was necessary not only because the divine nature is what it is—love—but because human nature is what it is—sinful—and therefore in need of infinite mercy and help. The Spirit of Christ came into the world to make that mercy and

help real and available to the children of God. His Spirit impelled Him to give Himself for us on the Cross, and to us in His resurrection. In the hour of His supreme suffering self in Christ, in a sense, ceased to be. He had no tears for His own sorrows, no lament for Himself as forsaken, crucified, dying. "Weep not," He said, "for me." His prayer in that hour was not for Himself, but for the men who nailed Him to the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:24).

Here was a new thing in the world, love, deeply wronged, daring to love, unashamed in the face of the enormity that wronged it. "He saved others, and therefore himself he cannot save." The Cross of Christ, itself, was the climax of a vicarious, sacrificial life for the children of God. No message is so swift and certain as love, no love is so strong as that which has on it the imprint of the wounded hands and feet. No example is so inspiring as that of selflessness; no love so quick to make us be brave and pure. The greatest regenerative power in the world is love, and it was that which made Christ give Himself for us. "He loved me," says Paul, "and gave himself for me." Because the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of unlimited sacrifice for all the children of God, it is the essential spirit of Christianity.

The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of unfailing love for the glory of God. By "the glory of God," we mean the nature of God and the character of God—Christ. The New Testament makes it clear that the object of all of Christ's life and teaching and

service was to make men know and understand that God is love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The measure of God's love is the measure of His sacrifice. Because He loved, He gave what was dearest to Him, His only begotten Son. Christ insisted that His death on the Cross was not the purchase but the proof of God's forgiving love. Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall, in his book, *The Gospel of the Divine Sacrifice*, says: "The atonement is not the cause of God's love, but His love is the cause of the atonement." This was the substance of all that Christ said, and the reason for all that He did. He always made it clear that He came to serve and save men because God loved them. Never once did He teach men that God loved them because He died for them. God's love was always first in the mind and ministry of Christ. "We love him because he first loved us" (I John 4:19).

The priority of God's love was the centre of Christ's teaching, as well as of His life and work. The parable of the lost sheep in the fifteenth chapter of Luke sets forth this truth in a striking way. God seeks before He is sought. He continues seeking until His effort is rewarded in finding the object of His search. This was Christ's conception of God, and it is the distinguishing glory of Christianity. It is utterly absent from all other religions. In them the underlying thought is that of man seeking God. It was left to the "Son of Man," who came to seek and to save that which was lost,

to reveal the true nature and character of God. Christ revealed a God who is a Father, one who cares what His children do, and who is pleased or painfully affected by their conduct. In response to the question, How can God suffer? Jesus asks, How can God love, and *not* suffer? The need of a revelation of divine love is the primary need of man. It comes first and stands highest. Apart from this knowledge, man's blessedness cannot be secured. To know what is most essential in God, to know Him as He really is, is to come into possession of eternal life. "And this is life eternal that they might know me" (John 17:3).

Revelation, then, is necessary to reconciliation. Because man needs to know, and know Him, and because He wants to be known and loved, God revealed Himself in and through Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. Christ shows us that God is mighty to save because He is mighty to love. As the chief of lovers He was the chief of sufferers. Loving unto death, He suffered unto death. Through the unfailing love of the Spirit of Christ for the glory of God, we know that the nature of God is love, and the character of God is perfect. We know that He is the Saviour of the sinful, the comforter of the sorrowing, the healer of the sick, the friend of the lonely, the companion of the fearful, the deliverer of the enslaved, the light of the doubting, and the joy of the despairing. God's message through Christ to all of His children is, "Fear not—care not."

Because the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of unfaltering loyalty to the will of God, of unceasing

service for the Kingdom of God, of unlimited sacrifice for the children of God, and of unfailing love for the glory of God, it is the essential spirit of Christianity.

*" Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.*

*" Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.*

*" Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The baptism of the heaven-descended Dove,
My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame."*

THE ESSENTIAL TEST: LOYALTY TO CHRIST

IN days when men everywhere are claiming the right to define the test of Christianity we do well to ask, What, after all, *is* the essential test of Christianity? Of course, this is not a new question; every generation has asked it, in one form or another. Several ready-made answers are offered to us at once. "Acceptance of the creed," says the dogmatist, "is the essential test of Christianity." "Joining the Church," says the ritualist; "Consciousness of certain feelings," says the sentimentalist; "Conformity to a code of conduct," says the moralist; "Support of social reforms," says the socialist.

There is, no doubt, some truth in each of these answers, but no one of them, or all combined, gives us a complete and satisfactory definition of the essential test of Christianity. For the final answer we must go to Christ. All other answers have value and authority only in so far as they are in accord with the teaching of Christ. We affirm that loyalty to Christ is the essential test of the Christianity of the New Testament, and we cite in particular the teachings of Christ in the Gospels.

Christ made loyalty to Himself an absolute con-

dition for discipleship. Throughout His entire ministry He demanded a personal loyalty between Himself and those to whom His message was delivered. It was through the power of such personal loyalty that He worked for the acceptance of His message at the first. He presented Himself before the world, drawing it off from its speculations, its ritualized dogmas, its traditional ethics, and fixed its thoughts upon Himself, a new centre of life, and of truth, and of inspiration. His position was without parallel. The philosophers had said: "Accept our ideas, adopt our systems, follow our commands," but Christ said: "Follow me" (John 1:43); "Learn of me" (Matt. 11:28); "Confess me" (Matt. 10:32); "Obey me" (John 15:4); "Love me" (John 21:17); "Abide in me" (John 15:4). No other religion ever made a similar claim. No religious teacher ever insisted on such a personal demand or asked such personal devotion to Himself; and the devotion is summed up in one word—loyalty.

Christ asked from men nothing of an external nature, but He steadily and constantly required their personal love and loyalty. He did not ask of any a place to lay His head; it mattered little if Simon asked Him to his feasts, but once there it did matter whether Simon was loyal to Him or not. Waiving all personal ministration, He yet claims personal loyalty. Here is a man indifferent to what is done for Him or to Him, but demanding unfaltering loyalty to Himself on the part of all who are His friends and followers. He made it clear to all who would follow Him that it was not

truth or purity or wisdom they were to love, but Him; that they were to be faithful, not so much to their convictions as to Him; that what they did was of secondary importance as compared with their love for Him. In a word, He was more concerned about their attitude than their actions, for He knew that if their attitude towards Himself was one of unflinching loyalty, their actions would take care of themselves. Christ makes the most unqualified demand on the loyalty of His disciples, and He believes that the attraction of His Person will sustain their allegiance: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Jesus Christ founded His religion on the instinct of loyalty, not on the instinct of fear or the instinct of self-interest, and thus He makes loyalty to Himself the essential test of Christianity.

Final evidence of this fact is beautifully set forth in His interview with Peter, recorded in the twenty-first chapter of John. Three times Christ applied the test of loyalty to Peter, and finally Peter responded whole-heartedly: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things," my denials, my sins, my weakness; Thou knowest I love Thee and want to be loyal to Thee. Christ might have asked Peter many embarrassing questions that morning, questions about his promises, questions about his knowledge, questions about his service, questions about his sins, but He did not. He had one test-question: "Do you love me, Peter, and will you be loyal to Me?" No other religion meets men with the same challenge of personal loyalty. This is the distinctive charac-

teristic of Christianity among the religions of the world. Other religions have had noble ethical ideas, splendid ritual systems, but no other religion has rested on the Person of its founder or made loyalty to its founder the essential test. The response to the essential test of Christianity must always be given in terms of personal heart loyalty, as well as in intellectual assent. That is all Christ wanted to know about Peter, and that is all He wants to know about any man. Thus we believe that loyalty to Christ is the essential test of Christianity; but why should it be so?

Loyalty to Christ is the foundation of Christianity. Christianity is founded on a Person, not a dogma. It is a Person, not a principle, that invites our faith; a person, not a code, which asks for our loyalty; a Person, not a ceremony, which calls forth love in human hearts. When Christ founded His religion on personal loyalty, it seemed a fond imagination, but the perennial vitality of Christianity has been His vindication. Jesus always appealed to the instinct of loyalty, the deepest instinct in man. If a man began to make terms, to lay down conditions of discipleship, He would have none of it. He demanded unconditional surrender. When a man came to Him and said, "Lord, I will follow Thee, but my religion must not interfere with my business, or my politics, or my social life," Christ then said: "You cannot follow at all." For Christ's appeal is always to loyalty and for loyalty, and it is the very essence of loyalty that it makes no conditions. Christianity insists on having followers in whom loyalty to

it is the master passion of their lives. It was not the beauty of the ethical system of Christianity, or the comfort of its promises, that drew and held the apostles to Christ. There flared up in them a gigantic passion of loyalty to Him. It was the splendid loyalty of the disciples that was the rock on which Christ built His religion and His Church. Loyalty to Christ was and is the distinctive mark of discipleship, the only test we have a right to apply to any man who wants to be a Christian. Loyalty to Christ was and is the way into the Kingdom, and it ought to be the way into the Christian Church. Loyalty to Christ is not only the foundation of Christianity, it is the essence of Christianity. There is no substitute for loyalty to Christ in the Christianity of the New Testament.

Loyalty to Christ is the motive for obedience in Christianity. All other motives are cold and unattractive and ineffective. Loyalty to Christ makes obedience attractive. Men do not stop to argue about carrying out the wishes of one to whom they are loyal. Christianity calls all the followers of Christ to a life of obedience, which is always a life of gladness, because it is a life of loyalty. The life of self-will is a blundering, stupid, empty, ineffective life. The most attractive and effective life known to man is the life that obeys Jesus Christ. Loyalty to Christ makes inclination duty and duty inclination, and thus provides an adequate motive for obedience. "If ye love me," said Christ, "keep my commandments." Wherever there is loyalty, there is the supreme delight in divining and in satisfying the wish and will of the leader

and friend. His slightest word is law to the loyal heart, and his look is an inspiration.

The secret of all Christian morality is that duty is changed to choice, because loyalty to Christ is made the motive for obedience. Loyalty to Christ is both law and impulse. "Love and do as thou wilt," said a great Christian teacher. This is always possible when loyalty to Christ is the dominating motive of life. You do not make men good by telling them what goodness consists in, nor yet by setting forth the bitter consequences that may result from wrongdoing. All of that is surface work; it does not go to the roots of man's needs. To tell a man what he ought to do is very little help towards his doing it. Loyalty to Christ gives both the knowledge of what we ought to be and, with that knowledge, the desire and the power to be. Christianity, in terms of loyalty to Christ, deals with the will from within, and moves and moulds and revolutionizes it. Not to do wrong may be the mask of a slave's timid obedience; not to wish to do wrong is the charter of a son's free and loving service. Freedom does not consist in doing what I like; that turns out, in the long run, to be the most abject slavery under the severest of tyrants. For proofs of this fact, witness the Prodigal Son of Luke 15. Real freedom consists, for me, in liking to do what I ought. Loyalty to Christ creates and stimulates this liking in men, and for this reason it is the essential test of Christianity.

Loyalty to Christ is the incentive to sacrifice. Man is the creature of a twofold ancestry, and brings with him instincts belonging to both the

worlds from which he comes. From the brute world he brings the instinct of getting; from the spiritual world he brings the instinct of giving, the desire for opportunities of sacrifice. Loyalty to Christ not only creates the instinct of giving, it nourishes it, and develops it.

It is possible for a man to give generously and yet be no better for the giving. Behind all sacrifice is the incentive. The nature of the incentive determines the value of the sacrifice. Loyalty to Christ is the highest possible incentive, as well as the most powerful incentive to sacrifice known to man, and therefore it is the essential test of Christianity.

Loyalty to Christ is the bond of fellowship. Whenever we meet an individual Christian in the New Testament, we see him as a partner in the simple and gracious fellowship of the Christian society. He is no lonely warrior. He is a unit in a noble army by whose comradeship he is heartened. He draws on the common stock of his fellow-Christians for nourishment of his common loyalty to Christ, and His ideals. Christian fellowship is rooted and grounded in loyalty to Christ, not in a common organization, a common opinion, or a common ceremony. The distinctive character of all Christian fellowship is loyalty to Christ. Christian fellowship was the outstanding note of the apostolic Church because loyalty to Christ was the dynamic of their faith. The New Testament makes it clear that Christian fellowship is always inevitable when loyalty to Christ is the essential test of Christianity. All other tests divide Chris-

tians. Loyalty to Christ unites Christians. The bond of union in the Christian society is only this, a loyalty to Christ which confesses that "Jesus Christ is Lord." Everything else—doctrines, organizations, ceremonies, discipline—follows.

If you build your church on a foundation of common opinions, then it follows that there must be as many churches as there are varieties of opinions; or again, if you build your church on a foundation of common organization, then your church becomes a prison instead of a home; or if, once more, you build your church on the foundation of a common goodness of character, then your church will have no welcome for the sinful and the needy whom the Son of Man came to seek and to save. The only adequate foundation for a Christian Church is loyalty to Christ as Saviour and Lord. Once we agree that loyalty to Christ is the supreme test in Christianity, we find ourselves in a large world, a world in which we can reach out to all kinds of men with whose opinions we disagree on the ground of our loyalty to Christ.

Loyalty to Christ makes every man who is a friend of Christ our friend, and because he is our friend we want him inside the family circle. We want him at our Father's table, that we may give sacramental expression to our fellowship. Loyalty to Christ always gathers and unites and binds Christians together in a holy fellowship. The needs of our times ought to call out in us all a deeper sense of the unity of all who accept loyalty to Christ as the foundation of Christianity, the motive to obedience, the incentive to sacrifice, the

bond of fellowship, and the essential test of Christianity. Loyalty to Christ is the final index of character and destiny, as well as the essential test of Christianity. In the last analysis men are known by their supreme loyalty. Tell me what your supreme loyalty is, and I will tell you what you are and what your destiny will be. Loyalty to Christ is the highest loyalty known to mankind and only those who are loyal to Him have a right to bear His name and be known as His followers. "Lovest thou me?" was the first and last question of Christ to His apostles and it is His first and last question to men to-day. Where that is found, Christ can build His Kingdom. Loyalty to Christ assures men of a dynamic which will conquer all difficulties and create in them a faith that overcomes the world.

*"Jesus, Thou Joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.*

*"Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
Thou savest those that on Thee call;
To them that seek Thee Thou art good,
To them that find Thee, All in all.*

*"Our restless spirits yearn for Thee,
Where'er our changeful lot is cast;
Glad when Thy gracious smile we see,
Blest when our faith can hold Thee fast.*

*"O Jesus, ever with us stay,
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away,
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light."*

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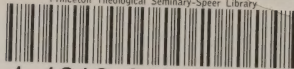
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